

WILLIAM MORRIS

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WILLIAM MORRIS HIS ART HIS WRITINGS AND HIS PUBLIC LIFE

A RECORD BY
AYMER VALLANCE

REFERENCE



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IN MEMORIAM P.A.T.P. CVIVS
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NERIO SVFFRAGANTIBVS MISERI-
CORS MISEREATVR DE CELIS DEVS

PREFACE

THOUGH it was not my intention to conform to the convention of writing a preface, circumstances have made it necessary that I should do so. In the first place I may draw attention to the fact that I chose purposely to name my book as I have done, so as to show that it makes no claim to be a biography or a record of Mr. Morris's private and family affairs. Such a work I was neither asked nor authorized to write. It is true, of course, that I had the privilege of knowing the late Mr. Morris personally—from the year 1883 onwards until his death. At the same time I submit that, with a few trifling exceptions, I have not introduced into the book any details of his life which were not already common property—which could not just as well have been strung together by anyone who knew where to find the scattered references in Mr. Morris's own writings, and in various other publications, without ever having met Mr. Morris face to face; nor more than such as were necessary to link together the contents of the book in some sort of consecutive order.

I am bound to state that when, having been commissioned to do so, I first approached Mr. Morris, in the autumn of 1894, on the question of the proposed book, he told me frankly that he did not want it done either by myself or anybody else so long as he was alive, but that if I would only wait until his death I might do it. Thus I am now in the position of having Mr. Morris's express sanction to bring out a work upon himself; nor need I point out that he could have stopped its preparation at the outset, had he chosen to withhold permission to reproduce his designs. Whereas, on the contrary, he insisted that, if the work came out at all, it must be illustrated; he gave me then and there a general permission to reproduce a selection from the property of the firm of Morris and Co., provided I obtained the consent of his partners. He wrote to them himself, as I afterwards learned, to let them know that he, for his part, had given his consent, and left the matter thenceforward to their discretion to accord me such facilities as they pleased (which I am bound to say they did with a courtesy coupled

with the kindest assistance, for which I do not know how to express all the thanks that are due); he gave me specific authority to reproduce a number of ornaments of the Kelmscott Press, some of which he suggested and chose for me himself, only stipulating that the blocks for this purpose should be prepared by Mr. Emery Walker; he referred me to Mr. Fairfax Murray, the owner of some early cartoons of great value from the artist's hand; and lastly, when he lay on his deathbed, Lady Burne-Jones having asked him, on my application to be shown the books illuminated by him in her possession, whether he approved of her doing so, he replied that it was quite right, and himself told her of the forthcoming book I had in preparation. Accordingly, Lady Burne-Jones was good enough to let me see all the books I desired, and moreover allowed me the opportunity of making what notes of them I pleased for publication. For the rest, except for a number of necessary corrections and useful suggestions, kindly offered me by Mr. F. S. Ellis and Mr. S. C. Cockerell, most of which are incorporated into the chapter on the Kelmscott Press, neither the members of Mr. Morris's family nor his friends have made themselves responsible for what I have written.

I was compelled, for reasons explained in the preface to "THE ART OF WILLIAM MORRIS,"¹ to confine myself then to a portion only of the work I had intended to publish. At the same time I hinted at the possibility of issuing at some future date all the matter I had in hand relating to the subject. This I am glad to be able now to do. The present volume comprises fifteen, whereas the former consisted of only eight chapters, and represents my work in a complete form. As in the case of the former book the chapter on the firm of Morris and Co., Decorators, remains perhaps the distinctive feature, treating as it does connectedly of what is, I believe, so far fresh ground, nothing beyond incidental notices or short articles having been written by previous writers on the history of this

¹ "The Art of William Morris." By Aymer Vallance; and Bibliography by Temple Scott. Imperial 4to. London, 1897.

most important factor in the progress of modern art. Added to the above I may venture to name the twelfth chapter, the compilation of which cost me more anxious care and research than almost any other portion of my book. Here, again, more exhaustively and in greater detail than anybody has done hitherto, I have traced the course of Mr. Morris's connection with a movement which, whether one sympathizes with it or not, has been described as "the vital force in contemporary society and politics."

In conclusion I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Temple Scott for allowing me to base upon his bibliography my chronological list of Mr. Morris's printed works and of the Kelmscott publications; to Mr. Fairfax Murray for much information, and for permission to reproduce some beautiful works of art in his collection; to Mr. Charles Holme, the present proprietor, for courteous permission to include the seven illustrations of the Red House; to Sir Edward Burne-Jones for helping me to select for reproduction certain typical details of tapestry from his design; and, lastly, to the many others, especially Mr. Gleeson White, Mr. Emery Walker, Mr. Frederick H. Evans, and Miss Gertrude Anderson, who, in various ways, have contributed to lighten the responsibilities of my task.

AYMER VALLANCE.

LONDON, *August*, 1897.

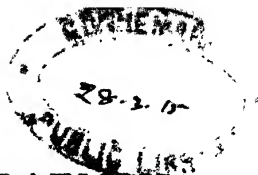
Advantage has been taken of the opportunity afforded by a second edition to correct several errors and omissions.

A. V.

March, 1898.

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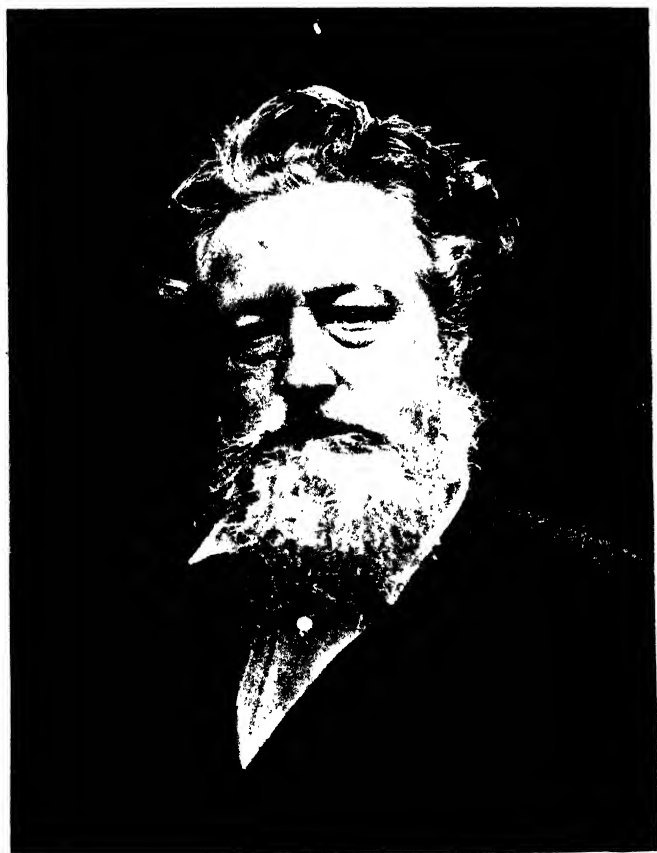
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William Morris

THE ART OF WILLIAM MORRIS.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING OF DAYS.

"WHAT are you?"

"I am an artist and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe."

It was on September 21st, 1885, when some few members of the Socialist League and others, having tried, on the previous day, to test the right of public speaking, were charged at the Thames Police Court with resisting the police whilst in the execution of their duty, and also with obstructing the highway. Mr. William Morris was present during the hearing of the case, and subsequently was placed at the bar for alleged disorderly behaviour in court. The prosecution failing to make out a case against him beyond the fact, which he himself confessed, that he had been carried away by his feelings so far as to exclaim "Shame!" on the passing of the sentences upon the prisoners, he was dismissed accordingly. The above is the description Mr. Morris gave of himself in the course of his examination by the magistrate on this same occasion. It is but just, however, to state that anything that savoured of self-assertion was entirely foreign to Morris's nature, and that the remark was wrung from him only at a moment when he was stung with an acute sense of the indignity of his position. In the daily press at the time there lacked not some ironical remarks about the artist's "European reputation." Nevertheless, Morris's was no empty boast; rather, his own estimate was considerably below the mark. For there needed not the past ten years to spread his fame so much more extensively, but that, had he so chosen, he might have claimed justly, even in 1885, to be known in the four continents. No quarter of the globe but contains either stained glass, carpets, tapestries, or other works of art from the firm of Morris and Co.; and as for Mr. Morris's numerous writings in prose and verse, their circulation is certainly not confined to the limits of the English-speaking peoples.

How widely his works are studied and esteemed in the

THE ART OF

United States of America, the many articles that have appeared in different periodicals and reviews in New York and in Boston, in Baltimore, in Cambridge, Mass., and in New Haven, bear witness. While as to France, which has so long assumed itself, and has by too many amongst ourselves been accepted, as being the most artistic nation in the world, there is a growing dissatisfaction with its own performances, and a corresponding recognition of the superiority of the English school of decoration which had Mr. Morris for head.

In this regard a significant fact may be noted. A well-known French critic, in a notice of the new postage stamp and its designer, suggests that in the person of Eugène Grasset a fitting object of artistic homage has now been found nearer home than William Morris. Thus implicitly does the writer treat it as beyond question that, but for the genius discovered all too tardily in their midst, his countrymen had been bound to concede the highest place of honour to the English master before any of their own people.

Of Welsh extraction, William Morris, the eldest son of his parents, was born in Clay Street in the (then) village of Walthamstow, Essex, on March 24th, 1834. "In his own way," it has been said, "he was fond of . . . his birthplace, as one or two stray references to it in 'News from Nowhere' testify." The chief of these references are as follows: "'I was born and bred on the edge of Epping Forest, Walthamstow and Woodford, to wit.' 'A pretty place, too, . . . a very jolly place, now that the trees have had time to grow again since the great clearing of houses in 1955.'" A few lines farther on Morris describes how some one, in the romance, approached holding "some of the plant that I used to call balm: its strong sweet smell brought back to my mind my very early days in the kitchen-garden at Woodford, and the large blue plums which grew on the wall beyond the sweet-herb patch,—a connection of memories which all boys will see at once. . . . 'When I was a boy, and for long after, except for a piece about Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, and for the part about High

Beech, the forest was almost wholly made up of pollard hornbeams mixed with holly. . . . I have not seen the place now for many years, except once. . . . I was very much shocked then to see how it was built over and altered. . . . What you were saying about the building being stopped and the trees growing is only too good news.'"

In the same work Morris recalls with lingering regret the pleasantness of the meadows by "'the lovely river Lea (where old Isaak Walton used to fish . . . about the places called Stratford and Old Ford.'"

Moreover, though it is as representative of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings that he writes in "The Nineteenth Century" in 1889, there is personal feeling in Mr. Morris's expression of gratitude to Mr. Shaw-Lefevre for the latter's "successful efforts to save the poor remains of Epping Forest from complete destruction." The matter indeed was one very near to Morris's heart. As recently as 1895 he wrote two letters to "The Daily Chronicle" on the subject of tree-felling in Epping Forest. "I was born and bred in its neighbourhood," he says in the first letter, dated April 22nd, ". . . and when I was a boy and young man, knew it yard by yard from Wanstead to the Theydons, and from Hale End to the Fairlop Oak. In those days it had no worse foes than the gravel stealer and the robbing fence maker, and was always interesting and often very beautiful." He goes on to say that the forest, being composed of pollard hornbeams "interspersed in many places with holly thickets," forms a "very curious and characteristic wood such as can be seen nowhere else." He pleads earnestly for the preservation of these trees, and urges that not a single one of them ought to be felled unless it be necessary for the growth of its neighbours, lest irreparable damage be done and "the essential character of one of the greatest ornaments of London disappear." Morris's statements having been controverted, he took the trouble to go down for a long day's inspection of the place, visiting in turn Loughton, Monk Wood, Theydon Woods, Chingford by way of Fair Mead Bottom and lastly Bury Wood. He then assured himself that he

had not been mistaken, and wrote again to "The Daily Chronicle" to that effect on May 8th. He showed, on the evidence of what he had seen on the spot with his own eyes, and from passages in a report of one of the official conservators, that the steps proposed on the part of those who had charge of this "strange, unexampled and most romantic" forest were, by getting rid of the hornbeams, to alter its special and native aspect. And he maintains that his claim on behalf of the trees still standing is timely and useful at that juncture while yet, "in spite of all disfigurements, the northern part of the forest, from Sewardstone Green to beyond Epping, is still left to us, not to be surpassed in interest by any other wood near a great capital." Morris was thus to the last warmly attached to his old home scenes. It has also been recorded of him that "as a boy of nine, with a pony of his own, he rode half Essex over in search of old churches." Such was the practical beginning of his artistic researches, and so firm a hold did they take upon his mind that, after many years' interval, he could remember the details of a building he had not seen since his boyhood.

As many a one besides himself must own with thankfulness to having done, Morris imbibed his first impressions, acquired his first taste for art and romance, from Sir Walter Scott. For this writer he always cherished an enthusiastic admiration, wherein he would not submit to be outdone even by Mr. Ruskin. William Morris could not recall a time when he was unable to read, and, by the early age of seven, had read the greater part, if not indeed every word, of Scott's works. From Scott it was, in the first place, that he learned to love Gothic architecture, though not, certainly, to apologize for loving it, as Scott felt himself obliged to do to the pedantry of his generation. "It is curious," remarks Morris, "as showing how sometimes one art will lag behind another in a revival, that the man who wrote the exquisite and wholly unfettered naturalism of the 'Heart of Midlothian,' for instance, thought himself continually bound to seem to feel ashamed of, and to excuse himself for" his instinctive love of

Gothic architecture. For his part, Morris's association of ideas will be conveyed best in his own words: "How well I remember as a boy," he says, "my first acquaintance with a room hung with faded greenery at Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, by Chingford Hatch, in Epping Forest, and the impression of romance that it made upon me! a feeling that always comes back on me when I read, as I often do, Sir Walter Scott's 'Antiquary,' and come to the description of the green room at Monkbarns, amongst which the novelist has with such exquisite cunning of art imbedded the fresh and glittering verses of the summer poet Chaucer." Elsewhere Mr. Morris speaks of other pleasant reminiscences, when, referring to the late Dr. Neale's carol of "Good King Wenceslas," he says, "The legend itself is pleasing and a genuine one, and the Christmas-like quality of it, recalling the times of my boyhood, appeals to me at least as a happy memory of past days." On the other hand, the stress of the officialism that bore upon him in his public school career, previously to which he had been sent to Forest School in his native place (under the headmastership of Dr. Gilderdale), left a less agreeable if not less enduring impression. "I was educated at Marlborough under clerical masters, and I naturally rebelled against them." It is said however that the lax discipline of the place in those days allowed him ample opportunity for cultivating his individual tastes and pursuits. One experience of his public school days may be gathered from an incidental allusion which, years afterwards, he made in an address to a South London audience. The man, he observed, must be hard to move who could look without emotion upon Stonehenge, and that although the stones that remained then, in 1894, were much fewer than they were at the time when Morris was yet at school at Marlborough.

"The Captain of our Dormitory, who was much more fond of out-of-door life than of study," writes an old school-fellow of Morris's in "The Marlburian," "made great friends with Morris—not that their tastes were at all similar, but that the former having a passion for listening to tales of romance . . . found quite a repertoire of them

in Morris. 'Such wonderful stories,' he would say, 'that fellow Morris is able to tell one.' But Morris was not always in such favour with his friend; for at other times the friend, in the height of indignation, his own conservative instincts taking great offence, would be inveighing against the extraordinary opinions to which Morris had been giving utterance." Thus it was evident, remarks the writer, "that 'the boy was father of the man.'"

William Morris was not above fourteen years old when, about the year 1845, according to his own reckoning, "the first general appearance of the Pre-Raphaelites before the public" took place. But the time for him to come under their influence was not yet. On the contrary he considered the early training that was provided for him to have been that of a layman in the matter of painting and the other arts, notwithstanding the fact that he used, in his young days, to be taken to see the Royal Academy. "I remember distinctly myself," he says, "as a boy, that when I had pictures offered to my notice I could not understand what they were about at all. I said, 'Oh, well, that is all right. It has got the sort of thing in it which there ought to be in a picture. There is nothing to be said against it, no doubt. I cannot say I would have it other than that, because it is clearly the proper thing to do.' But really I took very little interest in it, and I should think that would be the case with nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of those people who had not received definite technical instruction in the art, who were not formally artists."

However, with his undergraduate days Mr. Morris was destined to undergo a great development. The 2nd June, 1852, the date of his matriculation at Exeter College, Oxford, must be regarded as marking one of the most momentous events in his life. True, neither in his own time at the University, nor yet for a considerable number of years later, was there any sort of æsthetic tradition with regard to decoration of the rooms or the surroundings of the men. But for all that the genius of the place was more powerful in that pre-æsthetic period of the early fifties, to leave a

lasting impress on the sympathetic and receptive than, as Mr. Morris never ceased to regret, it is now or probably ever will be again. The early zeal of the Tractarian movement had scarcely had time to cool, or to become diverted into side issues; the University Commission, the Gaul within the gates, had not begun to carry out their reforming work. And as for the old city itself, it was still, comparatively speaking, untouched by modern "improvements," in the shape of new college buildings and new schools. His own college did not present a new front to the Broad, neither had its homely old chapel been replaced by a bran-new travesty of St. Louis's thirteenth-century "Sainte Chapelle." Magdalen Bridge had not yet been widened; neither did tramcars, only less obnoxious in such a place than steamers on the Grand Canal at Venice, desecrate the High. Mr. Morris has on more than one occasion expressed his opinion quite candidly on the subject: "It is a grievous thing to have to say, but say it I must, that the one most beautiful city in England, the city of Oxford, has been ravaged for many years past, not only by ignorant tradesmen, but by the University and College authorities. Those whose special business it is to direct the culture of the nation have treated the beauty of Oxford as if it were a matter of no moment, as if their commercial interests might thrust it aside without consideration." The result is that the Oxford of to-day is "a lamentable example of all kinds of architectural errors and mistakes, and crimes, I might almost say. There, some time ago, when they were roofing the new buildings, which I am very sorry to say they built there, like Exeter College Chapel, they roofed them with stone slates." The stone slates decaying, the roofs were stripped and covered with green Westmoreland slates, which "on a grey stone building in Oxford . . . look absolutely horrible." Lecturing in 1883 in Oxford, "amidst sights and memories which we older men, at least," observed Morris, "regard with nothing short of love," he told his audience how sorely the changed aspect of the place distressed him. "Go through Oxford streets," said he, "and ponder on what is left us

there unscathed by the fury of the thriving shop and the progressive college. . . . *Must* I speak to you of the degradation that has so speedily befallen this city, still the most beautiful of "all our finest and most ancient cities?"—"a city which, with its surroundings, would, if we had had a grain of common sense, have been treated like a most precious jewel, whose beauty was to be preserved at any cost. . . . I am old enough to know how we have treated that jewel—as if it were a common stone kicking about on the highway. . . . When I remember the contrast between the Oxford of to-day and the Oxford which I first saw thirty years ago, I wonder I can face the misery (there is no other word for it) of visiting it." The passage previously quoted continues: "There are many places in England where a young man may get as good book-learning as in Oxford; not one where he can receive the education which the loveliness of the grey city used to give us. Call this sentiment if you please, but you *know* that it is true." In another lecture he records how, while an undergraduate at Oxford, he "first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history and romance took hold on me; I can only say that, looking back on my past life,"—after a lapse, that is, of between thirty and forty years—"I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had: and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again: it is lost to the world for ever." At the time when a "restoration" of Rouen Cathedral was in prospect, Morris, in vigorous language, opposed it in "The Daily Chronicle;" deprecating any such measures which, in the generally understood sense of the word "restoration," "*must* mean serious and lasting injury" to the building, "and *may* mean the destruction of all interest and beauty in it." "It would be impossible," so he wrote, "to overestimate the interest of this most beautiful monument of art, which, taking it altogether, is second to none in the two great architectural countries, France and England. And though visitors to the ancient Norman capital are most often captivated by the extraordinary elegance of St.

Ouen, and in consequence somewhat neglect the cathedral, the latter has both more interest and more special beauty than the former." The proposed scheme necessarily implied the re-doing of detail "into a mere modern imitation of the ancient work. This has been done for some years now" (1895) "in the case of the Palais de Justice in Rouen, which is, in consequence, no longer a beautiful Late Gothic building, as I first saw it in 1853, but a lifeless modern 'study in Gothic' prepared in the architect's office, and carried out slavishly by the workman reduced to a mere machine." "It is now thirty years ago," writes Morris in 1884, "since I first saw Rouen, then almost entirely a mediæval city, and more romantic and beautiful than words can convey; I wonder how many beautiful houses have been wantonly or commercially destroyed in those thirty years, leaving no record behind them."

"Though not so astounding, so romantic, or at first sight so mediæval as the Norman city, Oxford in those days still kept a good deal of its earlier loveliness; and the memory of its grey streets as they were has been an abiding influence and pleasure in my life, and would be greater still if I could only forget what they are now—a matter of far more importance than the so-called learning of the place could have been to me in any case, but which, as it was, no one tried to teach me, and I did not try to learn." In another place Mr. Morris supplies further autobiographical details relating to the same period. "Not long ago,"—it was in February, 1856, that these words appeared—"Not long ago I saw for the first time some of the churches of North France; still more recently I saw them for the second time; and, remembering the love I have for them and the longing that was in me to see them, during the time that came between the first and second visit, I thought I should like to tell people of some of those things I felt when I was there." However, as a matter of fact, he does not describe in detail any church beside that named in the sub-title of his article, viz., "Shadows of Amiens," wherein, by many years, he anticipated strikingly Mr. Ruskin's "Bible of Amiens." It was by

the northernmost door of the great triple porch of the west front that Mr. Morris passed into the building for the first time. "I think I felt inclined to shout when I first entered Amiens Cathedral; it is so free and vast and noble, I did not feel in the least awestruck or humbled by its size and grandeur. I have not often felt thus when looking on architecture, but have felt, at all events at first, intense exultation at the beauty of it; that, and a certain kind of satisfaction in looking on the geometrical tracery of the windows, on the sweeping of the huge arches, were, I think, my first feelings in Amiens Cathedral." Proceeding to describe the magnificent choir-stalls and the figure subjects sculptured upon them, he says that those he remembers best are the scenes of the history of Joseph, and in particular that which represents the dream of Pharaoh. "I think the lean kine about the best bit of carving I have seen yet, . . . the most wonderful symbol of famine ever conceived. I never fairly understood Pharaoh's dream till I saw the stalls at Amiens."

But to return to Oxford. It was surely something more than mere chance that there should have matriculated on the very same day at the same college with William Morris the man whose name must ever be associated with his, viz., Edward Burne-Jones, "of whom indeed," said Mr. Morris, in 1891, at Birmingham, the native place of the former, "I feel some difficulty in speaking as the truth demands, because he is such a close friend of mine." The two freshmen quickly became acquainted, and, discovering how many tastes and aspirations they had in common, were drawn together in intimate comradeship, a bond which continued steadfast and unbroken to the day of Morris's death. They shared one another's profound enthusiasm, it is scarcely necessary to say, for the art and literature of the Middle Ages. Morris, so Mr. Herbert Horne says, "had come to Oxford with a great admiration for the writings of Mrs. Browning; at college he became acquainted not only with the works of Browning and Tennyson, but also with some older writers, with Froissart's Chronicle, and especially with a book which was

destined to have an extraordinary influence upon him and his circle, the 'Morte d'Arthur' of Malory. The copy, in two volumes, of Southey's edition of 1817, is still in existence, which Morris bought and had bound in white vellum, while he was still an undergraduate at Exeter, and in which he and his friends became acquainted with the Arthurian legend."

But that was not all. The Pre-Raphaelite movement, which was by this time steadily making its way, was not wholly unrepresented in the city of Oxford, where Mr. Combe, the director of the Clarendon Press and a liberal art patron, had already gathered together the nucleus of a Pre-Raphaelite collection. Amongst other works of which he acquired possession were Holman Hunt's famous "Light of the World," and his less known picture "A family of Converted Britons succouring Christian priests," and also Dante Gabriel Rossetti's beautiful water colour, "Dante celebrating the anniversary of Beatrice's death." The work of the latter artist only needed to become known to Morris and Burne-Jones to find at once a responsive chord in the breasts of the two friends; for them to recognize in him the truest exponent living of their own high ideals. It is difficult to say which of them conceived the more passionate admiration for the great Pre-Raphaelite master. In the mind of either no doubt remained as to his proper vocation, and both decided to devote themselves to an artistic calling; and that notwithstanding the prevailing bias of University opinion was decidedly adverse to such a course, if we may accept what one of their friends wrote in the "Oxford and Cambridge Magazine" in an essay entitled "Oxford." "The Fine Arts," the writer remarks, "wherein Truth appears in its most lovable aspect, where are they? Mr. Ruskin says bitterly, that only they who have had the blessing of a bad education can be expected to know anything of painting. Certainly Oxford must bear a large share of the shame that in England the Fine Arts are considered only as 'accomplishments' for ladies, and artists are held to follow only a superior trade."

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It was some time about Christmas 1855, that Burne-Jones, abandoning his idea of entering the ministry, first sought out Rossetti in London with the intention of becoming his pupil. Nor did long time elapse before he introduced his friend Morris to his new-found master, whom he then described as "the greatest man in Europe." Following the latter's advice, Burne-Jones went down from Oxford instead of waiting to take his degree, in order to begin the systematic study and practice of art without loss of time. William Morris, on the contrary, in no hurry to leave Oxford, preferred to complete his University course, and took his B.A. degree in 1856.

CHAPTER TWO: FROM OXFORD TO LONDON.

MORRIS was, as has been stated, only a boy at Marlborough College at the date of the original formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, nor was he at any time later on enrolled formally in their ranks. Yet he did not hold himself so far aloof but that he became associated, like Ford Madox Brown, who neither belonged to the Brotherhood, with the most prominent members of the school in more than one early enterprise. In fact, to so large an extent was he influenced by them, that, if not in absolute accord with their aims and theories in every detail, it cannot be said that the standpoint from which he started differed in any material degree from theirs. A year or two before his death Rossetti is stated to have spoken with some amount of contempt of the movement and of "the visionary vanities of half a dozen boys," adding "we've all grown out of them, I hope, by now." Anyhow, the members of the school were very much in earnest at the beginning, and it does not appear that Morris ever referred to them otherwise than in the highest terms. "You know well," said he, in a lecture delivered at Birmingham in 1880, "that one of the master arts, the art of painting, has been revolutionized. I have a genuine difficulty in speaking to you of men who are my own personal friends, nay, my masters. Still, since I cannot quite say nothing of them, I must say the plain truth, which is this: never in the whole history of art did any set of men come nearer to the feat of making something out of nothing than that little knot of painters who have raised English art from what it was when as a boy I used to go to the Royal Academy Exhibition, to what it is now." The principles of the Brotherhood, as understood by Mr. Morris, and as set forth by him in the already referred to address at Birmingham in 1891, are, briefly, as follows: firstly, "the root doctrine, Naturalism," by no means to be confounded with Realism in the modern sense, for "pictures painted with that end in view will be scarcely works of Art." The Naturalism of the Pre-

Raphaelites meant the deriving inspiration direct from Nature, instead of allowing themselves to be fettered by the lifeless conventions of Academical tradition. In the second place, their work must have an épical quality; in other words, they "aimed, some of them no doubt much more than others, at the conscientious presentment of incident." The third necessity is the ornamental quality. "No picture, it seems to me," says Mr. Morris, "is complete unless it is something more than a representation of nature and the teller of a tale. It ought also to have a definite, harmonious, conscious beauty. It ought to be ornamental. It ought to be possible for it to be part of a beautiful whole in a room, or church, or hall. Now, of the original Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti was the man who mostly felt that side of the art of painting; all his pictures have a decorative quality as an essential, and not as a mere accident of them." But to add, for the fuller development of the school, what was lacking of "the element of *perfect* ornamentation," to vindicate its position as representing "a branch of the great Gothic art which once pervaded all Europe," one other distinguishing feature was necessary, viz., Romance; "and this quality is eminently characteristic of both Rossetti and Burne-Jones, but especially of the latter."

Is it permissible to go a step further and to affirm that all these excellent qualities were yet inadequate, so long as the consummating quality, too apt to be overlooked just because of its very humbleness, was lacking? that one which, in default of a better name, may be called the domestic element? Perhaps the difference it made was not so much one of kind as of degree, of the extent to which Pre-Raphaelite principles were capable of application, or ought properly to be applied, to other arts beside painting. It is due to William Morris that all arts were brought within the comprehension of one and the same organic scheme; and herein he proved himself in advance of the Pre-Raphaelites, that he did succeed in giving the revival of art a wider and profounder scope than they. True, one of them was a sculptor, others men of letters;

but excepting the production of the short-lived magazine "The Germ," until Mr. Morris joined the movement, the function of art in their hands had been confined practically to the making of pictures; and thus the best of their works, in the nature of the case, could affect the public taste but indirectly and to a limited degree. For a number of years such pictures as were exhibited by the painters of the Pre-Raphaelite school were to be found, as a rule, only in obscure galleries; many were not shown to the public at all, but passed direct from the artists' studios into the hands of private purchasers. In any event, not the many but the few could possibly become the fortunate possessors of original paintings. It is, therefore, a supreme achievement of William Morris's to have brought Art, through the medium of the handicrafts, within reach of thousands who could never hope to obtain but a transitory view of Pre-Raphaelite pictures; his distinction, by decorating the less pretending but not less necessary articles of household furnishing, to have done more than any man in the present century to beautify the plain, everyday home-life of the people.

That was a fitting tribute, paid in his official capacity of Vice-President of the Society of Arts, when, taking the chair at the reading of Mr. Morris's paper on the Woodcuts of Gothic Books, Sir George Birdwood thus introduced the lecturer:—"It is not only as a poet and an art critic that he is one of the first Englishmen of the Victorian age. When the decorative arts of this country had, about the middle of the present century, become denationalised, it was Mr. William Morris 'who stemmed the torrent of a downward age,' and, by the vigour of his characteristic English genius, upraised those household arts again from the degradation of nearly two generations, and carried them to a perfection never before reached by them. . . . A born decorator, he knew that it is decoration that animates architecture, and all form, with life and beauty, But being also a trained architect, he from the first recognized that ornament was but an accessory to construction of every kind, from the vessels turned on a potter's wheel to the

grandest creations of the builder's master art. Thus, and by his commanding intellectual and moral personal influence with his contemporaries, the future of English decorative design, in all its applications, was redeemed by Mr. Morris."

But, not to anticipate, the various stages by which this came about must be traced step by step. Referring to the time when Mr. Morris found himself at the outset of his artistic career, the late Mr. William Bell Scott wrote: "Morris's first step in this direction was to article himself to George Edmund Street, then located in the University town as architect to the diocese" of Oxford. The very fact of his electing an architect's training proves how thoroughly William Morris, as compared with the others of the movement, had grasped the fundamental idea of the nature and essence of Art. If not the first of them to recognize in theory, he was at any rate the first to act logically upon what is involved by the principle that all true ornament must be derived from and allied to some archetypal form of architecture, not necessarily in so pronounced a manner as to be obvious at first sight, yet always in such a way as may be disclosed on analysis. To William Morris architecture is at once the basis and crowning-point of every other art, the standard by which all the rest must be dominated and appraised: again and again has he insisted that no sound art can exist as the common practice and possession of a nation which has lost its architectural traditions. Thus he himself puts the case:—"I have spoken of the popular arts, but they might all be summed up in that one word Architecture; they are all parts of that great whole, and the art of house-building begins it all: if we did not know how to dye or to weave; if we had neither gold, nor silver, nor silk; and no pigments to paint with, but half a dozen ochres and umbers, we might yet frame a worthy art that would lead to everything, if we had but timber, stone and lime, and a few cutting tools to make these common things not only shelter us from wind and weather, but also express the thoughts and aspirations that stir in us. Architecture

would lead us to all the arts, as it did with earlier men : but if we despise it and take no note of how we are housed, the other arts will have a hard time of it indeed." Architecture, therefore, in the wider sense of the term, he considers "to mean the art of creating a building with all the appliances fit for carrying on a dignified and happy life." Again, "A true architectural work is a building duly provided with all the necessary furniture, decorated with all due ornament, according to the use, quality and dignity of the building, from mere mouldings or abstract lines, to the great epical works of sculpture and painting, which, except as decorations of the nobler form of such buildings, cannot be produced at all. So looked on, a work of architecture is a harmonious, co-operative work of art, inclusive of all the serious arts, all those which are not engaged in the production of mere toys, or of ephemeral prettinesses."

This is the keynote of Morris's art doctrine, this the secret of his own masterful power of constructive ornament. Whether or not he intend to devote his life to an architect's profession, no better education for an artist can be desired than that he should be strengthened at the beginning with an architectural back-bone. Consider, for instance, the one continental decorator who, beside the honourable exception of M. Serrurier of Liège, may be said to share in any notable degree the æsthetic qualities of the English school, that is, of the school of Morris. Although it is true that neither does Eugène Grasset any longer practise as an architect, still, when one contrasts his work with that which generally passes for decoration in the modern French school, the remarkable breadth and versatility of his designs must be attributed to the early discipline of his architectural training.

Judged by the standard of the present day, Mr. Morris's choice of a master may be indeed not a little surprising. Nay, in view of Mr. Street's neo-thirteenth century platitudes, more particularly in view of his largest and most conspicuous performance, the Courts of Justice in the Strand, it is hard to imagine how, save by way of warning

what at all hazards to avoid, there could have been anything to impart by such a teacher to the pupil so gifted. Mr. Morris, with generous loyalty, has indeed written: "As to public buildings, Mr. Street's Law Courts are the last attempt we are likely to see of producing anything reasonable or beautiful for that use." And in addition it is only fair to recall the fact that time was when in cases of proposed "restorations" of ancient churches, &c., cautious and discriminating judges of these matters used to consider Street, among the contemporary architects, the most capable and the safest man to be entrusted with the responsibility of dealing with the precious handiworks that our fathers have bequeathed to us. Moreover, for upwards of five years, from May, 1852, the date when, by the advice of Mr. J. H. Parker, he migrated from Wantage, Mr. Street had been quartered in Oxford. Thence he eventually moved to Montague Place, Bloomsbury. But his residence in the University city coincided exactly with the space of Morris's undergraduate period, and during that time and onwards Mr. Street continued to maintain the kindest attitude towards the leaders of the æsthetic revival. "The Pre-Raphaelite movement," to quote the memoir written by his son, Arthur Edmund Street, "found in him a hearty and earnest adherent, and one who on many occasions, by writing and speaking, impressed on his brethren the importance and propriety of their giving it all the moral support in their power. He felt truly that the aim of the young enthusiasts, who were striving for truth before everything, was, in their particular field, identical with the aim of the leaders of the Gothic revival in the field of architecture. His known views speedily brought him into relations of friendship with many of those who belonged to the Pre-Raphaelite group, or were in sympathy with it." So after all it is not difficult to account for the fact of Mr. Morris having been drawn to look for the realization of his hopes under Mr. Street's tuition. For a time, at least, he entered with enthusiasm into his master's projects. For instance, there happened an open competition of designs for a Cathedral to be

erected at Lille. The announcement had been made in the previous year, 1855. The chief condition stipulated on was that the building must be in the French Gothic style. Morris's principal was one of the English architects who prepared and sent in designs. Contrary to usual custom, the several drawings were shown to the public before being submitted to the jury for selection. Mr. Street, accompanied by William Morris, took the occasion to run over to Lille for a few days' visit, and wrote home thence with reference to the designs. "We have had about three hours at the Exhibition. We are agreed naturally that I ought to have place No. 1. . . . I really think I shall have one of the prizes. Morris says the first." The pupil's over sanguine, yet pardonable, expectations, were not destined to be fulfilled; for as a matter of fact Street's design, though not passed over altogether, was awarded only the second prize.

It was a comparatively short time that Morris continued under Street's tuition. Not the least of Morris's characteristics was his remarkable gift of concentration; and this, together with the astounding rapidity with which he was wont to go straight to the root of a matter and to master in the space of a few months, or even weeks, that of which it would take an ordinary mortal as many years of laborious application to learn maybe the bare rudiments, fortunately made it unnecessary for him to submit to be hampered for any length of time by the irksome routine of office work. After nine months had expired Morris threw up his articles with Mr. Street; for the premium he had paid he preferred to sacrifice if by so doing he might only be set free to strike out an independent line of action for himself. He never qualified nor entered the formal profession of architect.

One circumstance of no small importance in his subsequent career Mr. Morris owed to the brief period of his discipleship, namely, his becoming acquainted with his loyal and intimate friend Mr. Philip Webb, who at that time was employed as chief assistant to Mr. Street, and is well known at the present day as an architect in practice

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in Raymond Buildings, Gray's Inn. The other advantage that had resulted, says Mr. Herbert Horne (who, however, takes perhaps rather a cynical view of the case), was that "Morris soon discovered that the modern architect is concerned not with the production of architecture, but with the conduct of business." Unquestionably Morris conceived a strong aversion to the mechanical office-plan system of neat and elaborately laboured drawings on paper for the art of architecture. No permanent or vital good could result from such a system, he was convinced,—a system belonging to the period when the accepted teaching was "that nothing could be art that was not done by a named man under academical rules." But, further, Mr. Street, in his capacity of official architect of the diocese of Oxford, was engaged, at the very time of Mr. Morris's articles, "in the wholesale 'restoration' of Gothic buildings, as their destruction is still euphemistically called for the purposes of the profession." It was therefore impossible but that the pupil should have an opportunity of gaining "that insight into the ways of the 'restorer' which afterwards caused" him and his companion Webb "to found and carry on, with so much influence for good, . . . the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings."

On going down from Oxford in 1856, Mr. Morris settled in lodgings, with his friend Burne-Jones, at 17, Red Lion Square, where they shared a studio in common. There was, indeed, at the beginning of the next year, some idea of extending the *ménage* so as to form a sort of college of artists working together with kindred tastes and aims, but, for some reason or other, the plan was not found to be practicable, and so nothing came of it.

Another event of 1856 was the appearance of "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine," in the preparation of which, under the direction of Rev. Canon R. W. Dixon and Rev. William Fulford, Mr. Morris took a prominent part. Conducted by members of the two Universities, the magazine was issued in London from the house of Messrs. Bell and Daldy. This serial lasted exactly a year, being published in monthly numbers from January to December

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inclusive. Originally sold at one shilling per part, it has now become both scarce and valuable. Mr. Morris's own copy was guarded with the utmost care; while that in the British Museum is to be seen only by the reader who, passing through a barrier into an inner room, remains under the immediate observation of one of the library officials. The contents of the magazine comprise essays, tales, poems, and notices of books, all the matter, except the verse, being printed in double columns. One or two contributions are initialled, but not one appears with the full signature of its author. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who, however, was not connected with the "Oxford and Cambridge Magazine" for the first half year of its existence, contributed "The Burden of Nineveh" to the August part, "The Blessed Damozel," a version of which had already appeared in "The Germ," to the November part, and "The Staff and Scrip" in December. Among other writers were Vernon Lushington, Jex-Blake and Burne-Jones. But the largest contributor was William Morris, who furnished a series of short prose romances, and a small number of poems, which immediately signalized their author as a man of extraordinary talents, on the strength of which it was not rash for his friends and others to whom his identity was known to augur that a brilliant future in the world of letters awaited him. It was evident that Ruskin had influenced him to no small extent, and also that he was imbued very deeply, with the spirit of mediæval romance.

The following, as far as can be ascertained, is a complete list of William Morris's contributions to "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine," in the order of publication:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| The Story of the Unknown Church. | A | |
| tale | . | January. |
| Winter Weather. | A poem | " |
| The Churches of North France. I. | Shadows | |
| of Amiens. | An essay | February. |
| A Dream. | A tale | March. |

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"Men and Women" by Robert Browning.

| | |
|--|------------|
| Critical notice | March. |
| Frank's Sealed Letter. A tale | April. |
| A Night in a Cathedral. A tale | May. |
| Riding Together. A poem | " |
| Ruskin and the Quarterly. An essay | June. |
| Gertha's Lovers. A tale. Part I. | |
| Chapters 1-3 | July. |
| Hands. A poem | " |
| "Death the Avenger" and "Death the Friend." Critical notice | August. |
| Svend and his Brethren. A tale | " |
| Gertha's Lovers. Part II. Chapters 4 and 5 | " |
| Lindenberg Pool. A tale | September. |
| The Hollow Land. A tale. Part I. | |
| Chapters 1 and 2 | " |
| The Chapel in Lyonesse. A poem | " |
| The Hollow Land. Part II. Chapter 3. | October. |
| Pray but one Prayer for us, &c. A poem. | " |
| Golden Wings. A tale | December. |

"Perhaps the best of Morris's tales in the 'Oxford and Cambridge Magazine,'" says the late William Bell Scott, "were 'Gertha's Lovers' and the 'Hollow Land,' but all of his contributions were unmistakable in imaginative beauty, and will some day be re-published." The poems which first saw the light in the magazine, with the exception of that entitled "Winter Weather," did in fact appear in the volume which Mr. Morris published two years later. But as regards the prose writings, unhappily the day for the fulfilment of Bell Scott's prediction has not yet arrived. Nor, seeing how severe a critic Mr. Morris was of his own work, and how sensitive he was on the subject of whatever he deemed immature experiments of his, was it probable that he ever would have consented to reprint any of his early writings in prose that were included in the "Oxford and Cambridge Magazine." And so they still lie buried, these "wonderful prose fantasies" of Mr.

Morris's, "these strangely coloured and magical dreams," as Mr. Andrew Lang not inaptly calls them. If "Lindenberg Pool" may not be accounted among the best or the most original of Morris's tales, nevertheless there attaches to it a peculiar interest, because of its opening passage: "I read once in lazy humour Thorpe's 'Northern Mythology' on a cold May night when the north wind was blowing; in lazy humour, but when I came to the tale that is here amplified, there was something in the tale that fixed my attention and made me think of it; and whether I would or no, my thoughts ran in this way, as here follows. So I felt obliged to write, and wrote accordingly, and by the time I had done the grey light filled all my room; so I put out my candles, and went to bed, not without fear and trembling, for the morning twilight is so strange and lonely." The above should not fail to be noted as the earliest published reference to its author's being attracted to a branch of study—Norse folk-lore and language, to wit—the knowledge of which he has done so much to extend amongst us that he may be said to have imparted additional distinction to the olden literature, and to have given it a fresh lease of life that shall endure, coupled henceforward with his own illustrious name, as long as the English tongue is spoken.

CHAPTER THREE: EARLY ART AND POETRY.

ESTABLISHED in town with his friend Edward Burne-Jones, at an age when, on looking back after ten or eleven years, he deemed himself as having been "pretty much a boy," it was only natural that Morris should begin to enlarge his circle of literary and artistic acquaintances. In a letter to William Bell Scott in 1875, acknowledging the gift of a book of verse by that writer, Morris refers to these early days and thanks him for "the poems that I first found so sympathetic when I came up to London years ago."

Rossetti, who was the means of introducing Morris to Ruskin and other well-known artists and literary men, writes thus to Bell Scott in the spring of the year 1857: "Two young men, projectors of 'The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine,' have recently come to town from Oxford, and are now very intimate friends of mine. Their names are Morris and Jones." (How commonplace a sound has this introductory mention, and how little suggestive of the celebrity they were ultimately to attain!) "They have turned artists instead of taking up any other career to which the University generally leads, and both are men of real genius. Jones's designs are marvels of finish and imaginative detail, unequalled by anything unless perhaps Albert Dürer's finest works; and Morris, though without practice as yet, has no less power, I fancy. He has written some really wonderful poetry too." That "the powers of the two men were very distinct" is the judgment which, when Bell Scott came to know them, himself formed and left on record in his "Autobiographical Notes."

Morris now set to work in real earnest, the preparation of his first volume of poems occupying no small portion of his time and attention. Nevertheless, he did not devote his energies exclusively to literature. In June, 1857, Rossetti writes again to Bell Scott, "Morris has as yet done nothing in art, but is now busily painting his first picture, 'Sir Tristram after his illness, in the garden

of King Mark's Palace, recognized by the dog he had given to Iseult,' from the 'Morte d'Arthur.' It is being done all from nature of course, and I believe will turn out capitally." The picture was ordered by Mr. Plint who, growing impatient, it would appear, at the artist's delay in finishing it, wrote to Morris's friend, Madox Brown, to find out how the work was progressing, and when he should receive it. In reply Madox Brown writes as follows on April 23rd, 1861:—"Morris I have spoken to. His picture is now in my house, and at my suggestion he has so altered it that it is quite a fresh work. There is still a figure in the foreground to be scraped out and another put in its place. It is this sort of work which makes it so difficult for a real artist to say when a painting will be finished. I take as much interest in Morris's picture turning out good as though it were my own, for, though it was not commissioned at my recommendation, I have repeatedly since told you that Morris is a man of real genius."

Rossetti was mainly instrumental, with others of Morris's friends, in founding the Club known as the 'Hogarth,' a name of evil promise—so one might have supposed—to any who seriously entertained hopes of the regeneration of English art. Mr. William Michael Rossetti is the authority for saying that "the original Hogarth Club was so named on the ground that Hogarth was the first great figure in British art, and still remains one of the greatest. Madox Brown (not to speak of other protectors of the Club) entertained this view very strongly, and I think it probable that *he* was the proposer of the name." But for this statement one would have believed that the choice of style could only have been one of those audacious whims wheretoward youthfulness, prone to paradox, will sometimes be drawn. Be that as it may, from its foundation and first meeting in July, 1858, down to April, 1861, when it was dissolved, the Hogarth Club proved a select resort of many distinguished men of the advanced artists and litterateurs of the time. It counted among its members, beside William Morris and the two

brothers Rossetti, Mr. F. G. Stephens, who was Honorary Secretary, Lord Houghton, Sir Frederic Leighton, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Col. Gillum, and Messrs. J. Ruskin, Ford Madox Brown, Spencer Stanhope, G. F. Watts, Arthur Hughes, Thomas Woolner, Hungerford Pollen, A. C. Swinburne, the Lushingtons, R. B. Martineau, Henry Wallis, P. A. Daniell, G. F. Bodley, John Brett, Eyre Crowe, jun., Michael F. Halliday, W. Holman Hunt, Edward Lear, Val. Prinsep, W. Bell Scott, George Edmund Street, Philip Webb, Benjamin Woodward, and various other men of mark. At the picture exhibitions held under its auspices from time to time, works of the Pre-Raphaelite school were sure of finding a welcome. Moving, after no long while, from its original premises at 178, Piccadilly, the Hogarth then continued for the remainder of its existence at 6, Waterloo Place. It had no connection of any sort—it may be observed—with the Club which but lately bore the same name, in Dover Street.

The year 1858 was one "which seems," says Mr. George Saintsbury in "Corrected Impressions," "to have exercised a very remarkable influence on the books and persons born in it," since "the books (as biographers and bibliographers have before noticed) were unusually epoch-making." It was in this year that Morris published his first book. Such, it has been claimed, is "Sir Galahad: a Christmas Mystery," purporting to be published by Messrs. Bell and Daldy a few months previously to "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems," in which indeed it is included. But the small work having been proved to be only an unauthorized and later reprint, the larger volume holds unquestionably the place of honour as the earliest work issued in William Morris's name. The significance of "The Defence of Guenevere," all things considered, has never perhaps been appreciated as was due. A young man, but twenty-four years old, Morris must be regarded, for all intents and purposes, as a pioneer in his kind. Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" had not as yet appeared; nor ought it to be forgotten that at this date the published poems of Rossetti, who is generally accredited

as standing to Morris in the relationship of master to disciple, did not consist of above a few occasional pieces contributed to periodicals. One has no desire, of course, to deny that the elder poet had already written a number of poems that Morris must have heard or read privately. Indeed, he himself was only too ready to acknowledge his indebtedness to Rossetti ; whereof the dedication of "The Defence of Guenevere," "to my friend, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, painter," is evidence enough and to spare, if such were wanted. But at the same time it must be borne in mind that Morris was before him in making the venture of publishing a collection of poems that should court success or failure openly in the world of book-buyers and critics. "This book was and is," says William Bell Scott, "the most notable first volume of any poet ; many of the poems represent the mediæval spirit in a new way, not by a sentimental-nineteenth-century-revival-mediævalism, but they give a poetical sense of a barbaric age strongly and sharply real. Woolner wrote to me at the time of publication, 'I believe they are exciting a good deal of attention among the intelligent on the outlook for something new.'" So recently, however, as 1895, Mr. Saintsbury could write on the subject of Mr. Morris, "It has always seemed to me that not merely the general, but even the critical public, ranks him far below his proper station as a poet." An appreciative writer, the late Mr. Walter Pater, in an essay on "Æsthetic Poetry" (1868), while as yet only the first part of "The Earthly Paradise" had appeared, accounts Morris as the type and personification of the poetry of the revived romantic school. This new poetry, according to him, takes possession of a transfigured world, "and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or 'Earthly Paradise.' It is a finer ideal, extracted from what, in relation to any actual world, is already an ideal. Like some strange, second flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but must not be confounded with it." The earliest of the modern romanticists, as represented by Scott and Goethe, had dealt with but one, and that the

most superficial, aspect of mediæval poetry, viz., its purely adventurous side. Later on the elements of mediæval passion and mysticism were embodied in the works of Victor Hugo in France and of Heine in Germany.

But in "The Defence of Guenevere" Mr. Pater discerns "a refinement upon this later, profounder mediævalism" and "the first typical specimen of æsthetic poetry." The book was in truth phenomenal. Its like had not before been known in England; where hitherto, as Mr. George Saintsbury rightly remarks, "only one or two snatches of Coleridge and Keats had caught the peculiar mediæval tone which the Pre-Raphaelites in poetry, following the Pre-Raphaelites in art, were now about to sound. Even 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' that wonderful divination, in which Keats hit upon the true and very mediæval, . . . is an exception, a casual inspiration rather than a full reflection." The strange gift of insight displayed in the just named poem of Keats, and less fully in Coleridge's "Christabel," has perhaps no parallel in history, nor one in fiction, save in Rudyard Kipling's "Finest Story in the World." Even in the case of the two poets in whom it was manifested it was, as it were, an inspiration vouchsafed for the occasion only, to be immediately afterwards withdrawn. Neither of them was able to follow it up consistently: and Coleridge wittingly left "Christabel" a fragment. But with Morris the exact opposite was the case. His "Defence of Guenevere" and the three poems next in order in the volume were saturated through and through with the true and vital essence of Arthurian romance; while the remaining poems savoured not less thoroughly of the very atmosphere of the Middle Ages. There was nothing that had found its way into these pages by haphazard, nothing sporadic; but the whole book from end to end was alive with the antique spirit of the days of chivalry, recreated and quickened by the hand of genius. Withal there was some indefinable quality superadded of the poet's very own. And so, possessing as they did "the bizarrerie of a new thing in beauty," the "imperishable fantasies" of "The Defence of Guenevere" "did fill a

fresh page in English poetry." (Mr. Arthur Symonds writes of Mr. Morris's "Guenevere" thus: "His first book—which invented a new movement, doing easily, with a certain appropriate quaintness, what Tennyson all his life had been trying to do—has all the exquisite trouble of his first awakening to the love of Romance." Nor was Morris yet, it has been observed under the influence of Chaucer, whose narrative manner was to inspire the poems he published later.)

(Of the poems contained in "The Defence of Guenevere," &c., the following had appeared previously in "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine," viz., "The Chapel in Lyonesse;" the concluding part of "Rapunzel," under the title "Hands;" "Riding Together," and "Summer Dawn." This last, in its original form, lacked a title; while the first line of it, "Pray but one prayer for us 'twixt thy closed lips," was now altered to "Pray but one prayer for me," &c. The poem "Golden Wings" is not to be confounded with the prose tale which Morris contributed, with the same title, to the magazine.)

It is interesting, moreover, to note the interchange of ideas consequent on the intimacy of the group of artist friends; their common studies acting and reacting upon them, and supplying some with themes for verses, some for pictures. Often it is a problem to determine whether it was the poem of one that suggested the painting of the other or *vice versa*. Thus the Arthurian legend, rhymed by Morris in "The Defence of Guenevere," was with Rossetti and his friends at this time a favourite for illustration. (Not only are the wall paintings in the Debating Hall, the present Library, of the Union Society at Oxford, a case in point; but a certain number also of sketches and water-colours of Rossetti's, belonging to this period, bear the identical titles borne by poems of Morris's, e.g., "King Arthur's Tomb," or the last meeting of Lancelot and Guenevere; "Sir Galahad;" "The Blue Closet," and "The Tune of Seven Towers;" while other drawings, such as that of "Lancelot in the Chamber of Guenevere," are obvious representations of incidents described in the

poetry of Morris. Some of these works of Rossetti's were actual commissions executed by him for Morris, from whom afterwards they were purchased by Mr. George Rae. Again, "Burd Ellayne," the central figure in Morris's spirited ballad of "Welland River," was pictured by Rossetti and became the property of the late Mr. J. Leathart of Gateshead on Tyne. In the way of reading, Pastor William Meinhold's wonderful romance of "Sidonia the Sorceress" was, to use Morris's own words, "a great favourite with the more literary part of the Pre-Raphaelite artists in the earlier days of that movement." Their common delight in it produced, for immediate result, "two beautiful water-colour pictures of Sidonia and Clara von Dewitz," by Sir Edward Burne-Jones; while on Morris's imagination it took powerful hold, as no one could fail to be assured who had once had the privilege of hearing him read aloud a passage such, for instance, as that which relates how Lord Otto von Bork received the homage of Vidante von Meseritz and his feudal vassals.) Morris simply revelled in the description of the knights riding into the hall, each with his blazoned banner displayed; and one can imagine how he would have relished giving the order, "the kinsman in full armour shall ride into the hall upon his war-horse, bearing the banner of his house in his hand, and all my retainers shall follow on horses, each bearing his banner also, and shall range themselves by the great window of the hall; and let the windows be open, that the wind may play through the banners and make the spectacle yet grander." This final direction was one which Morris knew how to appreciate to the full. Nor did the deep impression fade from his mind with the lapse of time, but was destined to take practical form years afterwards in a reprint of the book at the Kelmscott Press. Indeed, throughout the career of the two friends nothing is more striking than the close parallel presented in the subjects chosen by them for treatment in their several ways, by Morris for poetry, by Burne-Jones for pictorial illustration. But these are points which will have to be referred to again presently.

Meanwhile, to resume the consideration of "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems." Strong as is the temptation to quote largely, one must be content with a verse or two to demonstrate certain charming characteristics of the poet. "The Eve of Crecy" contains two magnificent examples of that mode of poetic expression, dubbed "echo-lalia" by Max Nordau, and as such condemned by him; a mode which, if few may attempt it with safety, is yet, in the hands of so consummate a master as Morris, unsurpassed for the peculiarly soothing and satisfying sense of beauty it produces.

"Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite."

And again, a few stanzas lower down we read:

"Yet even now it is good to think
* * * * *
Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite."

The refrains are always melodious and grateful, whether, as in the case of "Two red roses across the moon," they seem to have no necessary connection with the body of the poem, or whether, as in the case of "The Sailing of the Sword," on the other hand, they form, with slight variations from verse to verse, an integral part in the progress of the ballad-story. The same poem may illustrate Morris's gift of conveying, and that too from a point of view as fresh as it is convincing, the most graphic impression in the shortest number of words: *e.g.*,

"The hot sun bit the garden beds,"

and

"Grey gleamed the thirsty castle-leads;"

or this night-scene:

"The while the moon did watch the wood,"

from "Riding Together;" or this:

"After these years the flowers forget their blood,"

from the poem "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire." Yet again take the refrain of the poem called "The Wind:"

"Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find."

What an exquisite thought is enshrined in the last line! Here is a picture from "King Arthur's Tomb:"

"I gazed upon the arras giddily,
Where the wind set the silken kings a-sway."

And, once more, how perfect a description is the following, from "Golden Wings:"

"No answer through the moonlit night;
No answer in the cold grey dawn;
No answer when the shaven lawn
Grew green, and all the roses bright."

Nothing is wanting here. No paraphrasing of words, no further detail could express the sense more vividly or more completely than the poet has done in these four short, simple lines.)

It may not be amiss, before leaving the subject of "The Defence of Guenevere" to gather from the writings of some competent critics a few judgments concerning the work; dismissing, before the rest, that estimate which is the least favourable. Mr. Henry G. Hewlett, in the "Contemporary Review" for December, 1874, is of opinion that "Quaint archaisms of diction, forced and bald rhymes, wilful obscurity, harshness, not to say ugliness of metaphor, disfigure nearly every page." Having said this much, however, the very worst that anyone with any show of fairness could possibly say, he continues: "But a just and careful critic could not fail to discern that the singer was worthier than his song. He had so saturated his imagination with the glow of chivalric romance and Catholic mythology as to be incapable for the moment of anything beyond reproduction. But the receptive and assimilative power which enabled him to apprehend thus intimately the spirit of so remote an age, and imitate thus faithfully the relics of its living literature, required only time and training to mature into one of the richest of

poetic faculties. No sign of this power is more marked in the volume than the tone of *naïf* unconsciousness which the writer has caught from his models. His personality is never visible; he never preaches; dispenses praise and blame but rarely, and then in accordance with a standard not of his own raising. With calm impartiality he sets forth in successive pictures the double aspect in which the love of Guenevere for Lancelot seems to have presented itself to mediæval imagination,—the view adopted by Chivalry, and the view sanctioned by the Church. In 'The Defence of Guenevere' she is a Phryne, voluptuous, imperial, irresistible; in 'King Arthur's Tomb,' a Magdalen, tortured by remorse and tempted by passion, but sustained by penitence and faith unto the end. In 'Sir Galahad' the portrait of the saint-knight is painted with a truthfulness that atones for whatever clumsiness of handling may at first repel us. He is represented as setting out in his quest of the San-Greal with sharp misgivings of spirit as to the career of chastity to which he must vow himself. He witnesses the tender leave-taking of a lady and her knight, and thinks sorrowfully that for him no maiden will mourn if he falls. He recalls the loves of Lancelot and Guenevere, of Tristram and Iseult, and is tempted to envy their happiness and forget their sin. But in the chapel where he passes his first vigil, he has a vision of

"'One sitting on the altar as a throne,
Whose face no man could say he did not know,
And though the bell still rang, He sat alone,
With raiment half blood-red, half white as snow.'

"Overpowered with shame, he sinks nerveless on the floor." Then are heard the tender accents of the Divine Wisdom condescending to reason with His wavering servant. "The struggle in the youth's soul ceases ere the voice dies into silence, and the vision of the San-Greal is then revealed to eyes fitted to perceive it.

"The minor poems, of which the greater number are ballads, bear the same marks of the writer's thorough sympathy with a particular era of history and type of

literature. . . . His attempts seem to us as successful as any that have since been made. 'The Sailing of the Sword,' which is the least imitative, and therefore the freest from affectations, approaches, perhaps, as nearly as a modern ballad can hope to do, the genuine simplicity of the antique."

Of the latter portion of the work Mr. Andrew Lang writes, "Leaving the Arthurian cycle Mr. Morris entered on his specially sympathetic period—the gloom and sad sunset glory of the late fourteenth century, the age of Froissart, and wicked wasteful wars. To Froissart it all seemed one magnificent pageant of knightly and kingly fortunes; he only murmurs 'a great pity' for the death of a knight or the massacre of a town. It is rather the pity of it that Mr. Morris sees, hearts broken in a corner, as in 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End,' or beside 'The Haystack in the Floods.' . . . (The astonishing vividness, again, of the tragedy told in 'Geffray Teste Noire' is like that of a vision in a magic mirror or crystal ball, rather than like a picture suggested by printed words. 'Shameful Death' has the same enchanted kind of presentment. We look through a 'magic casement opening on the foam' of the old waves of war. Poems of a pure fantasy, unequalled out of Coleridge and Poe, are 'The Wind' and 'The Blue Closet.' Each only lives in fantasy. Motives and facts and story are unimportant and out of view. The pictures arise distinct, unsummoned, spontaneous, like the faces and places which are flashed on our eyes between sleeping and waking. Fantastic too, but with more of recognizable human setting, is 'Golden Wings.'")

Another critic, Mr. Buxton Forman, in "Our Living Poets" (1871), says of "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems," the "volume has very striking affinities with the poetry of more than one contemporary writer. Mr. Rossetti's influence is the easiest to discern; but there are also several attempts at psychological art, clearly indicating Browning's influence. . . . Connected mainly with the age of Chivalry in subject, every page is full of an exquisite tender feeling; and in many instances there

is great splendour of imagination. . . . Several small poems are masterpieces in their way; and every poem in the book is full of beauties. (But such pieces as 'Shameful Death,' 'The Judgment of God,' and 'Old Love,' monologues dealing subtly with the soul, have more real analogy with ballad poetry than with monologue poetry of the modern type, and would probably have been more perfect had they been executed in ballad form.) In 'The Judgment of God' in particular, the actual point of time whereat the monologue is spoken is anything but clearly distinguished from points of past time referred to. It is interesting to compare this piece with 'The Haystack in the Floods,' which is admirably graphic in narration, and as complete and excellent in its degree as are some later higher flights of Mr. Morris. 'The Judgment of God' is spoken by an evil-hearted knight about to engage in single combat with a good knight, who, as he fears, is to overcome him; the mental material is the series of thoughts passing through the false knight's mind immediately before engaging in the combat; and so mistily are some of the verses framed, that it is hard to know whether the facts referred to in them have just taken place or are from the storehouse of old memories. . . . With Mr. Morris this want of perspicuity finds its preventive in direct narration, as in 'The Haystack in the Floods.' The subject of the poem is not in itself so simple as the other; but, instead of either of the principal actors being commissioned with the narrative, the whole is given to us in Mr. Morris's own clear objective style. . . . The physiology and psychology in the sketch of Jehane are alike excellent. . . . It is probable that, were Mr. Morris treating a similar subject to this now, we should miss a certain fierceness that exists in it as matters stand. . . . 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End' is an excessively clever little play in five scenes; but it falls as far short of dramatic excellence as the monologues fall short of technical excellence in their kind."

"Over the first fortunes of a newly-born work of art," writes Mr. Algernon Charles Swinburne, who, as an under-

graduate at Balliol, had made Mr. Morris's acquaintance at Oxford in 1857, "accident must usually preside for good or for evil. Over the earliest work of the artist . . . that purblind leader of the blind, accident, presided on the whole for evil. Here and there it met with eager recognition and earnest applause; nowhere, if I err not, with just praise or blame worth heeding. It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or tradition rather than a poet or student. . . . Such things as were in the book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. . . . (In form, in structure, in composition, few poems can be . . . faultier than those of Mr. Morris which deal with the legend of Arthur and Guenevere. . . . I do not speak here of form in the abstract and absolute sense. . . . I speak of that secondary excellence always necessary to perfection but not always indispensable to the existence of art. These first poems of Mr. Morris are not malformed; . . . but they are not well-clad; . . . they have need sometimes of combing and trimming. Take that one for example called 'King Arthur's Tomb.' It has not been constructed at all; the parts hardly hold together. . . . There is scarcely any connection here, and scarcely composition. . . . But where, among other and older poets of his time and country, is there one comparable for perception and expression of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things? Where a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure? The figures here given have the blood and breath, the shape and step of life; they can move and suffer; their repentance is as real as their desire; their shame lies as deep as their love. They are at once remorseful for the sin and regretful of the pleasure that is past. The retrospective vision of Lancelot and of Guenevere is as passionate and profound as life. Riding towards her without hope, in the darkness and heat of the way, he can but divert and sustain his spirit by the recollec-

tion of her loveliness and her love, seen long since asleep and waking, in another place than this, on a distant night. . . . Retrospect and vision, natural memories and spiritual, here coalesce; and how exquisite is the retrospect, and how passionate the vision, of past light and colour in the sky, past emotion and conception in the soul! Not in the idyllic school is a chord ever struck, a note ever sounded, so tender and subtle as this. Again, when Guenevere has maddened herself and him with wild words of reproach and remorse, abhorrence and attraction, her sharp and sudden memory of old sights and sounds and splendid irrevocable days finds word and form not less noble and faithful to fact and life. . . . Such verses are not forgettable. They are not, indeed,—as are the ‘Idylls of the King,’—the work of a dexterous craftsman in full practice. Little beyond dexterity, a rare eloquence, and a laborious patience of hand, has been given to the one or denied to the other. These are good gifts and great; but it is better to want clothes than limbs.”)

Mr. Pater, in the work already quoted, says: “The poem which gives its name to the volume is a thing tormented and awry with passion, like the body of Guenevere defending herself from the charge of adultery, and the accent falls in strange, unwonted places with the effect of a great cry. . . . Reverie, illusion, delirium: they are the three stages of a fatal descent both in the religion and the loves of the Middle Ages. . . . The English poet, too, has learned the secret. He has diffused through ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’ the maddening white glare of the sun, the tyranny of the moon, not tender and far-off, but close down—the sorcerer’s moon, large and feverish. The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of ‘scarlet lilies.’ The influence of summer is like a poison in one’s blood, with a sudden bewildered sickening of life and all things. In ‘Galahad: a Mystery,’ the frost of Christmas night on the chapel stones acts as a strong narcotic: a sudden shrill ringing pierces through the numbness: a voice proclaims that the Grail has gone forth through the great forest. It is in the ‘Blue Closet’ that this delirium reaches its height with a

singular beauty, reserved perhaps for the enjoyment of the few. . . . Those in whom what Rousseau calls *les frayeurs nocturnes* are constitutional, know what splendour they give to the things of the morning. . . . The crown of the English poet's book is one of these appreciations of the dawn: 'Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,' &c. It is the very soul of the bridegroom which goes forth to the bride: inanimate things are longing with him: all the sweetness of the imaginative loves of the Middle Age, with a superadded spirituality of touch all its own, is in that!"

Lastly, in "The Academy," just a week after William Morris's death, Mr. Robert Steele wrote: "Living as we do in surroundings so modified by the efforts of its author, we cannot fully estimate the worth of this little volume. It is totally unlike any other of his works." This is perfectly true. "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems" is but a small book, and were its bulk alone to be the measure of value, the amount of space devoted to it in these pages might well seem disproportionate. It is, on the contrary, altogether inadequate. For this remarkable collection of poems stands alone not only in the literature of our age and of our country, but, what is more to the present purpose, alone also among its author's own productions.

CHAPTER FOUR: IN BETWEEN- WHILES: THE RED HOUSE.

HIS "Defence of Guenevere" finished and sent to press, William Morris did not rest idly. Before the work was yet issued he had applied himself, with his wonted industry, it must not be said to the composing—for the very idea of anything forced and artificial was foreign to the spontaneity of his nature—but to the inditing of more poetry; the greater part of which, however, was suffered to remain unpublished. Nor would a large portion of it, maybe, have survived at all, but for the friendly intervention of Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, who preserves the manuscript among the most valued of his treasures. Of the number of Morris's poems that belong to this early period, nothing has appeared beside "The God of the Poor," printed in "The Fortnightly," 1868, and the song, "In the white-flowered hawthorn brake," which was introduced into the story of "Ogier the Dane" in "The Earthly Paradise." According to the author's original plan, this lyric was to have formed part of a long poem entitled "Scenes from the Fall of Troy," of which, as projected, not more than about a third was ever written. Among the other unpublished MSS. in the possession of Mr. Murray is an additional scene to "Sir Peter Harpdon's End." Morris's old friend, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, in an obituary notice in "The Athenæum," says, "Morris could and did write humorous poetry, and then withheld it from publication. For the splendid poem of 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End,' printed in his first volume, Morris wrote a humorous scene of the highest order, in which the hero said to his faithful fellow-captive and follower, John Curzon, that, as their deaths were so near, he felt a sudden interest in what had never interested him before—the story of John's life before they had been brought so close to each other. The heroic but dull-witted soldier acceded to his master's request, and the incoherent, muddle-headed way in which he gave his autobiography was full of a dramatic and subtle humour. . . . This he refused to print, in deference, I suspect, to a theory of poetic art."

And, moreover, Mr. Edmund Gosse writes in the "St. James's Gazette," within a few days after Morris's death: "It is said that vast sections of 'The Earthly Paradise' remain unpublished; and I can vouch for it that more than twenty years ago I heard the poet read, in his full, slightly monotonous voice, a long story of 'Amis and Amylton' (I think these were the names), which has never, to my knowledge, appeared in print. Rossetti used to declare that there was a room, a 'blue closet,' in the Queen's-square house, entirely crammed with Morris's poetry from floor to ceiling. This was a humorous exaggeration of that wonderful fluency which was a characteristic of Morris's genius."

But the fact of the existence of certain unpublished verse-writings of Morris's, if not indeed known widely, was by no means a secret confined to the circle of his personal friends. Thus Mr. George Saintsbury, while avowing himself an absolute stranger to William Morris, declares that he has "been told that all the defaulting poems exist;" and, in addition, a writer in "The Sunday Times," on the day following the poet's death, understands "that there is a large mass of unpublished material which may be found more or less available for future issue." This, no doubt, has reference to prose writings of Morris's as well as poetry; but Mr. Saintsbury is clearly alluding to those poems which were advertised shortly beforehand but did not eventually make their appearance in "The Earthly Paradise."

Further MS. poetry, owned by Mr. Fairfax Murray, comprises a prologue to "The Earthly Paradise" in four-line stanzas, and a set of verses for the months of the year. All these portions of the work were re-written and other passages substituted in their room when the poem assumed its final state. From the MS. it would appear that even the very name was changed, the author having at one period an idea of calling it "The Fools' Paradise."

Another unpublished fragment is extant, being part of a poem "The Romance of the Wooers;" and yet another work, in this case completed, a version of one of the most

beautiful legends of Christian martyrology, viz., "The Story of Dorothea," dating from the time when Mr. Morris began to write again after the space of seven silent years or more that ensued upon the appearance of "The Defence of Guenevere." For so discouraging to the young author was the reception accorded to his first work that he had little enough heart to keep up his writing continuously, but turned his hand to other and more grateful occupations. His poems had, it is true, "found a few staunch friends," but, for the rest, "were absolutely neglected by the 'reading public.'" It is on record that only some 250 copies of the first issue of the work were sold. Therefore in stating, as he does in his "Reminiscences," that the publication of "The Defence of Guenevere" was "what gave Morris his proper position," Bell Scott must be taken as referring to the judgment of their own limited set. For he has to admit that, in spite of everything, "the book was still-born. The considerable body of perfectly-informed but unsympathetic professional critics are, strange to say, so useless as directors of public taste that they have never yet lifted the right man into his right place at once. After repeated volumes had attracted public favour," but not till then, a demand arose for Morris's earliest volume, and it had to be reprinted, the stock of "the original impression having been returned to the paper-mill."

"At one time," says a writer who is described by Max Nordau as "an Anglo-German critic of repute," Dr. Francis Hueffer, the author of the memoir prefixed to the Tauchnitz selection from Morris's poems, "little was wanting to make Morris follow his friend Burne-Jones's example, and leave the pen for the brush. There is indeed still extant from his hand an unfinished picture evincing a remarkable sense of colour." The work referred to depicts "Queen Guenevere" standing by her bed, her girdle held unfastened in her hands. It is a wonder that this painting is yet intact, for its history, a somewhat curious one, is as follows. Left at Ford Madox Brown's, it was conveyed thence by his son, Oliver Madox Brown, and given to Rossetti, who kept it

by him with the view of repainting it, because he was not satisfied that it did justice to the lady it portrayed. However, he never carried out his intention, and, after his death, the picture passed, with other property of the deceased painter, into the hands of his brother, William Michael. In this gentleman's possession it might possibly have still remained, but that he, being informed of its rightful ownership within a few months of the death of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, took steps to have the painting returned to Mr. Morris.

While staying temporarily in Oxford in the autumn of 1857 William Morris met the lady who, two years later, became his wife; the marriage, appropriately enough in the case of so eminent a scholar of English as the bridegroom, taking place in the old Saxon-towered Church of St. Michael in the Corn. There is no need to attempt any description of Mrs. Morris, since her features have been immortalized in numerous drawings and paintings from the hand of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Morris's engagement necessitated the providing a suitable home, with the preparation of which he was now busily occupying himself. The house was not got ready in time for him to take up his residence there at his marriage, so he had to wait awhile, and moved in shortly after. In the meantime, a company of ladies, friends of Mr. Morris, used to meet at the studio in Red Lion Square, and, while he himself was doing decoration in oil colour, they, under his superintendence, embroidered hangings, &c., for the adornment of his future home. One of these pieces of needlework was taken eventually to Kelmscott Manor and hung there. It was powdered all over with a repeated pattern, a design of Morris's of the quaintest description,—birds, for all the world like those in a Noah's ark, trees as stiff-looking as the clipped trees in a Dutch garden or a child's toy-box, and scrolls inscribed with the motto "If I can." The whole of it was executed in Berlin wool (the only medium available, except silk, in those days before crewels and Tussore-silks had been introduced), not of course in the fashion which then pre-



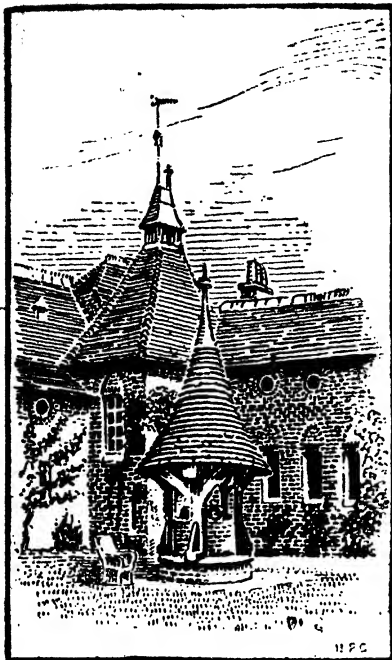
THE RED HOUSE.

FROM THE GARDEN.

vailed and, it is to be feared, is not yet extinct, to wit, cross stitches on a canvas foundation; but with a very different manner of working, in long and coarse stitches, as bold as effective. Another strip of embroidery executed for the same purpose, of a floral pattern, drawn likewise by Mr. Morris, was given by him, after its removal from its original position, to Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and is now at his house at Rottingdean.

The site Morris chose for his new house was an orchard at Upton, near Bexley Heath, amid "the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent." The highways of the county were dear to the poet through their having been trodden by the feet of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims; while its historic memories were illustrious in his eyes, because it was there had sprung up and spread among carles and yeomen the popular movement led by valorous John Ball.

Morris was not his own architect, but he employed his friend Philip Webb; who, however, in effect was merely carrying out Morris's directions, more particularly in the design of the internal fixtures. The building was given the appropriate name of "The Red House." A writer in



THE RED HOUSE.

THE WELL.

contemporaries of the ugly, square-box order which at that date seemed to be accepted almost universally. It was, for its time, a bold innovation, which cannot be said to have been without extraordinary results for good. Nay, as an experiment on the part of a man who had both the hopefulness and the dauntless will necessary to enable him to make a stand against the tyranny of custom, to William Morris is owing the credit of having initiated, with his Red House, a new era in house-building.

Morris set forth his views on the subject of architecture in a paper he contributed to "The Fortnightly Review" in May, 1888. "The revival of the art of architecture in Great Britain," he says, "may be said to have been a natural consequence of the rise of the romantic school in literature, although it lagged some way behind it. . . . Up

"The Studio" has referred to it as "that wonderful red building which proved to be the prototype of all the beautiful houses of the so-called 'Queen Anne' revival; although that house, it may be said in passing, is almost entirely Gothic, with strong French influence apparent." It is indeed remarkable as being the first example of the artistic use revived of red brick for domestic purposes. Picturesque and irregular of construction, it has an architectural character that distinguished it among its

to a period long after the death of Shelley and Keats and Scott, architecture could do nothing but produce on the one hand pedantic imitations of classical architecture of the most revolting ugliness, and ridiculous travesties of Gothic buildings, not quite so ugly, but meaner and sillier; and on the other hand, the utilitarian brick-box with a slate lid which the Anglo-Saxon generally in modern times considers as a good sensible house with no nonsense about it." But, he continues further on, "Were



THE RED HOUSE.

STAIRCASE.

the rows of square brown brick boxes which Keats and Shelley had to look on, or the stuccoed villa which enshrined Tennyson's genius, to be the perpetual concomitants of such masters of verbal beauty; was no beauty but the beauty of words to be produced by man in our times; was the intelligence of the age to be for ever so preposterously lop-sided? We could see no reason for it and accordingly our hope was strong; for though we had learned something of the art and history of the Middle Ages we had not learned enough. . . . Anyhow, this period of fresh hope and partial insight produced many interesting buildings and other works of art, and afforded a pleasant time indeed to the hopeful but very small minority engaged in it, in spite of



THE RED HOUSE. EARLY MORRIS GLASS.

tion of the Workman therein,' he showed us the gulf which lay between us and the Middle Ages. From that time all was changed. . . . I do not say that the change in the Gothic revivalists produced by this discovery was sudden, but it was effective. It has gradually sunk deep into the intelligence of the art and literature of to-day."

The above passages were written, it is important to note, some thirty-five years after the appearance of "The Stones of Venice." In the interval Morris had had time to recover from the shock of disillusionment. It had become evident to him that the splendid monuments of architecture of the Middle Ages, as well as all the minor arts, had been produced under, and owed their very existence to, circumstances totally different from our own—to

all vexations and disappointments." How that hope was dissipated he goes on to show: "At last one man, who had done more than any one else to make this hopeful time possible, drew a line sternly through these hopes founded on imperfect knowledge. This man was John Ruskin. By a marvelous inspiration of genius (I can call it nothing else) he attained at one leap to a true conception of mediæval art, which years of minute study had not gained for others. In his chapter in 'The Stones of Venice,' entitled 'On the Nature of Gothic and the Func-

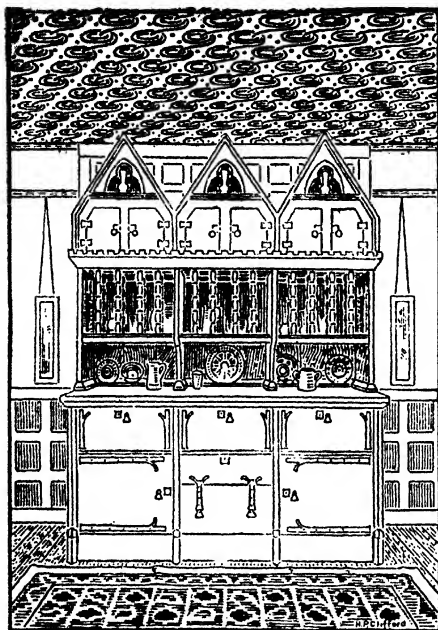
a set of traditions and a concurrence of forces, such that, if one or more of them could conceivably be resuscitated, would yet assuredly never again be found together in the same proportions and the same combinations as of old. However unwelcome the truth, the logic of facts and of history was not to be gainsaid save by "those who wilfully shut their eyes." To abandon oneself, nevertheless, to unprofitable bewailings for a vanished past that could not be recalled were sheer cowardice, as Morris perceived. So, once convinced that the



THE RED HOUSE. EARLY MORRIS GLASS.

causes of the dearth of sound art amongst us lay deeper than he had at first suspected, viz., in the very conditions of our modern social and industrial system, he determined to think the matter out and to devise, if it might be, a remedy for existing evils. Hence he learned to look for the fulfilment of his aspirations in the ideal of a future, wherein a reconstructed society should even surpass anything hitherto achieved in the most glorious of days bygone. "The hope of our ignorance has passed away," he wrote, "but it has given place to the hope born of fresh knowledge." Experts indeed were slow to grasp the full significance of the teaching of Ruskin, as Morris did not fail to record. And he himself, young and ardent as he was at the time, would naturally be as loth as any among them to accept

THE ART OF



THE RED HOUSE. DINING-ROOM BUFFET.

Bell Scott in his "Reminiscences," "was an immense red-tiled, steep and high roof; and the only room I remember was the dining-room or hall, which seemed to occupy the whole area of the mansion. It had a fixed settle all round the walls, a curious music-gallery entered by a stair outside the room, breaking out high upon the gable, and no furniture but a long table of oak reaching nearly from end to end. This vast, empty hall was painted coarsely in bands of wild foliage over both wall and ceiling, which was open-timber and lofty." (There are some obvious mistakes here. Bell Scott, though right enough in his impression of the general effect of the furnishing and so on, is decidedly wrong in detail. In fact, he confounds the features of two separate rooms, and would lead one to suppose, from the way he speaks of them, that all were to be found together in one apartment.) "The adornment,"

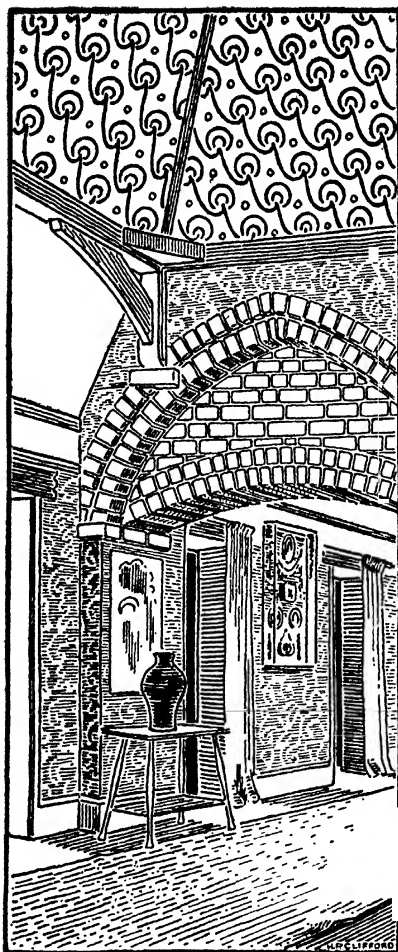
conclusions so tremendous. Had the consequent lesson come home to him, and had his reluctance given way earlier than it did, it is scarcely too much to assert that the Red House might not have existed at all. At any rate, Morris built but that once only, and never afterwards.

The date of the Red House, as the vane on the top of the roof shows, is 1859. "The only thing you saw from a distance," says

he continues, "had a novel, not to say striking, character. . . . Morris did whatever seemed good to him unhesitatingly, and it has been very good."

The following account is based on notes supplied by one who used to know the house in the old days. "The first sight of the Red House in 1863," says this writer, "gave me an astonished pleasure. The deep red colour, the great sloping, tiled roofs; the small-paned windows; the low, wide porch and massive door; the surrounding garden divided into many squares, hedged by sweetbriar or wild rose, each enclosure with its own particular show of flowers; on this side a green alley with a bowling green, on that orchard walks amid gnarled old fruit-trees;—all struck me as vividly picturesque and uniquely original." In the grass-plot at the back of the house is a covered well, with a quaint conical roof. "Upon entering the porch, the hall appeared to one accustomed to the narrow ugliness of the usual middle-class dwelling of those days as being grand and severely simple. A solid oak table with trestle-like legs stood in the middle of the red-tiled floor, while a fireplace gave a hospitable look to the hall place." To the left, close to the foot of the stairs, is a wooden partition, panelled with leaded panes of plain glass of antique quality. This screen divides the main hall from a lesser hall or corridor, which leads, at right angles, into the garden and is lighted by windows of glass quarries decorated with various kinds of birds and other devices. In the centre of two of these windows are single figure panels; the one representing Love, in a rich red tunic, flames of fire at his back, and a stream of water traversing the flowery sward at his feet; the other, Fate, robed to the feet in green, with a wheel of fortune in her hand.

Immediately to the right as one enters the hall is a wooden structure, the lower part projecting to form a bench seat; the upper part being a press or cupboard, with unfinished colour decorations. On the outside of the two doors of it are figure compositions, sketched in, and begun in oils, but left incomplete: while inside are some interesting experiments in diapering in black on a gold ground,



THE RED HOUSE.

LANDING.

back, the panels of it filled with leather, gilt and coloured. The chairs were plain black, with rush seats." Commonly accepted as is the use of this simple and picturesque form of chair at the present day, its revival is due to Mr. Morris's example.

by Mr. Morris's hand. Beyond this press is "thedoorthedining-room, the living room in fact. This is a long room and lies parallel to the hall. The fireplace stands out in the middle of the wall facing the entrance." It is of brick and, like the rest of the fireplaces in the house, is not provided with a mantelshelf, the chimney-breast of brick going straight up to within a short distance of the ceiling, where it finishes off with a coved top. Near the door, and occupying the greater part of the wall space to the left as one enters the room, a prominent feature "was a wide dresser which reached to the ceiling and was ornamented richly with painted decoration. By the fireplace stood a movable settle, with high

"The walls were tinted with pale distemper, and the ceiling ornamented by hand in yellow on white." The manner in which the ceiling decoration is carried out in this room and other parts of the house is most ingenious and effective. The pattern, a conventional repeat of the simplest form, was pricked upon the plaster, while yet moist and unhardened, the spaces between the pricked outlines being afterwards filled in with a flat tint of distemper colour, bright, but not so strongly pronounced as to be staring, or in any degree disagreeable.

Opposite to the front door, beneath an open pyramidal sort of lantern roof, rises the wide oaken staircase, with Gothic newel-posts at the angles; the underneath part of it not boxed in, as the ordinary custom is to conceal the construction, but left open and showing the form of the steps from below. "Upstairs—only one floor—above the dining-room is the drawing-room, with a decorated, open roof." The fireplace of brick with an open hearth, is provided with a brick hood, which slopes narrowing to the roof. "To the left of the fireplace was a daïs alcove with windows and window-seats. But the chief means of lighting was a large window at the end of the room furthest from the door. Facing the window was the most important feature of the room, viz., a painted bookcase or cabinet,—one scarcely knows how to describe it correctly. This great cabinet, of which the effect was gorgeous, nearly filled the end of the room. At one side was a wooden ladder stairway by which one could mount to the upper part of it and find room to sit or move about on the top, as on a balcony. From this stage another short ladder led into a storage-loft in the roof beyond."

"The walls of the principal bedroom were hung with embroidered serge. Here also stood a splendid wardrobe," decorated all over with gilding and colour, a wedding present painted and given by Burne-Jones. Morris himself executed part of the decoration on the inner folds of the doors. The subject which covers the front of this wardrobe is "The Prioress's Tale" from Chaucer; perhaps to the modern reader the most familiar of all the "Canter-

bury Tales," through Wordsworth's popularized version of it. The legend is not to be confounded with that of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, though there are certain points in common. The various scenes of the story are all represented, as was customary with mediæval artists, in the same picture, the principal subject being on a larger scale than the rest and occupying the foremost place in the composition. It depicts the Blessed Virgin stooping over the pit which contains the body of the murdered boy who in life had always been devout towards her, and placing on his tongue a grain which should enable him in death to continue singing "Alma Redemptoris Mater" to her praise.

Towards the end of the year 1860 Burne-Jones, while on a visit at the Red House, commenced a series of paintings in tempera upon the end wall of the large drawing-room there; Morris also himself contributing somewhat to the decorative work, of which, however, the more important share was necessarily that undertaken by Burne-Jones. The subject was the mediæval story of Sir Degrauaunt, another of those romances which, like "Sidonia the Sorceress," had begun to exercise a powerful charm upon both the painter and his host. The charm, indeed, survived to the end, as was testified by the fact that a Kelmscott Press edition of "Sire Degrauaunt," with a woodcut frontispiece designed by Burne-Jones, had for some time past been in preparation, although unhappily Mr. Morris did not live to see it issued, dying as he did before it was ready. Only three panels, and these forming the last out of the set, were ever painted at the Red House. In one of them Burne-Jones introduced the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Morris, seated side by side, in robes of state and crowned with coronets, in the characters of Sir Degrauaunt and his bride in the scene of the wedding banquet. These paintings are in a bad position for light, but they are in good hands and well cared for, having been covered with glass to insure their thorough preservation.

Nearabout the same time, *i.e.* the latter part of 1860, in a letter to Bell Scott, Rossetti writes to say that his wife has "gone for a few days to stay with the Morrises

at their Red House at Upton, and I am to join her there to-morrow, but shall probably return before her, as I am full of things to do, and could not go there at all, but that I have a panel to paint there." The work was in oils, and it is said that one week sufficed for its execution. The subject of one of Rossetti's compositions for the Red House was the Garden of Eden. He also painted the first meeting and the last meeting of Dante and Beatrice; in the middle, between the two scenes, being an allegorical figure of Love, holding a dial-plate in his hands. These panels were eventually removed when Morris parted with the Red House, and were framed in the form of a diptych. Morris did not occupy the Red House above six years. He gave it up at the end of that space and came back to live in London in 1865.

CHAPTER FIVE: OF THE FIRM OF MORRIS AND CO., DECORATORS.

"EVERYONE interested in the decoration of houses," said the chairman in introducing Morris before the lecture on "Textile Fabrics" at the Health Exhibition in 1884, "knew something of the good work which Mr. Morris had been doing during the last twenty years, and some day the history of what at one time appeared a mad enough venture, would not only be profitable, but amusing. In our days when young men left Oxford and Cambridge, they took to" one or other of the recognized professions; "but twenty years ago Mr. Morris entered upon a venture which seemed likely to end in loss of money and discomfiture, although, fortunately, it proved not to be the case." It was remarked by Mr. William Michael Rossetti, in the work containing his brother's life and letters, that a "detailed history of the firm of Morris, Marshall and Faulkner, or Morris and Co., would by this time" (1895) "be an interesting thing," but that such a record had "not yet been written." Nor maybe among those that now survive, except to Sir Edward Burne-Jones and Mr. Philip Webb, who, if any, should be in possession of the necessary particulars, can it be looked to furnish a full account; especially of facts and incidents relating to the earlier days, when the firm was more of the nature of an informal association of friends working together than a business partnership in the ordinary sense of the term.

To whom belongs the credit of having been the first to conceive the idea of the artistic venture that has developed since into the business of Messrs. Morris and Co., may not now perhaps be determined with absolute certainty. The initiation of the project has been attributed at various times to various members of the original firm; but the balance seems rather to incline in favour of Ford Madox Brown as one of the patriarchs of the revival. However, one thing at any rate is beyond doubt, that the whole undertaking owes its success to the patience and energy, to the enthusiasm, the originality—in a word, to the genius of William Morris, whose name it bears.

It has been shown how the furnishing of his own house at Bexley Heath had been made by Morris the occasion for exercising his ingenuity in embroidery design, in ceiling and mural decoration, and in several other ways, and generally of acquiring practical experience in different branches of domestic art. But what he began by doing then on a small scale, was destined to engage him from that time forward for the remainder of his life.

There is but slight necessity to enumerate the horrors proper to the early Victorian period—the Berlin woolwork and the bead mats; the crochet antimacassars upon horse-hair sofas; the wax flowers under glass shades; the monstrosities in stamped brass and gilded stucco; chairs, tables, and other furniture hideous with veneer and curly distortions; the would-be naturalistic vegetable-patterned carpets with false shadows and misplaced perspective; and all the despicable legion of mean shams and vulgarities which have been exposed and held up to ridicule times without number. The memory of them, associated as it is indissolubly with the geranium and the crinoline, must be only too painfully vivid to the minds of many of us. It is sufficient to say that love nor money could procure beautiful objects of contemporary manufacture for any purpose of household furnishing or adornment when William Morris undertook the Herculean and seemingly hopeless task of decorative reform, and wrought and brought deliverance from the thralldom of the ugly, which oppressed all the so-called arts of this country.

Two years and more elapsed from the time the proposition was first mooted; and during that interval not a few preliminary meetings were held, not a few times merely was the scheme discussed, before anything like a definite working plan was determined on. At one time two or three of those who originally constituted themselves members of the firm would assemble to discuss their plans at Madox Brown's house at 13, Fortess Terrace (now Junction Road), Kentish Town; at another time at Burne-Jones's rooms in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square; at another time again at Morris's own studio in Red Lion

Square. Morris is described by one, who met him first on one such occasion, as keenly alert and full of energy and movement,—altogether a most striking personality. There were other meetings, or, as they used to be called, "gatherings of the clans," at Madox Brown's house, for instance when himself took the chair and a larger number were present. Several ladies also who were interested as taking part in the work were present on certain occasions. At one of the general meetings, which took place about the middle of the year 1861, it was announced that rooms, for business premises, had been taken at No. 8, on the north side of Red Lion Square, W.C. "We had no idea whatever of commercial success," remarked Rossetti, ten years afterwards, in relating the circumstances to Mr. Theodore Watts, "but it succeeded in our own despite." "With a view," writes Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, in his record of the life and works of Ford Madox Brown, "of starting a sort of co-operative agency for supplying artistic furniture and surroundings primarily to themselves, but also to the general public, each of those present," it was agreed, "should lay down a stipulated sum. . . . The rules of incorporation were briefly: that each member should contribute designs for the various articles of use and ornament for which demand arose, and should be paid for his work in the usual course of events, before the profits, if any, were shared." Moreover, at the same time, it was mentioned that Mr. Bodley, the architect, had promised to commit the execution of certain orders for stained glass and other decorations to the firm, provided they were organized so as to be able to undertake them. Proposals as to ways and means having thus already been formulated, the business, under the style of Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., was now definitely set on foot. A strangely assorted group were they who comprised the original members of the firm. Ford Madox Brown, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Arthur Hughes, painters, the last of whom shortly withdrew; Philip Webb, architect; Peter Paul Marshall, district surveyor at Tottenham and engineer; and Charles

Joseph Faulkner, an Oxford don—these were Morris's partners in the firm. He himself was to undertake the business management and general direction of the affair. His father, before him, had been a man of business, and William Morris had inherited presumably some measure of his father's capacity. "Mr. Morris," says Mr. W. M. Rossetti, "came much the foremost, not only by being constantly on the spot, to work, direct and to transact, but also by his abnormal and varied aptitude at all kinds of practical processes." Beside the partners, of whom all, as it has been stated above, were to give active assistance according to their ability, the staff at the outset was of the smallest. There was Mr. George F. Campfield, subsequently appointed foreman, whom Madox Brown and Burne-Jones had met some two years previously among the students in Ruskin's class at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street; and there was also a man engaged to do the rough work of packing and so on. He, by the way, is the same who figures as one of the labourers in Madox Brown's "Work" at the Corporation Art Gallery at Manchester. When the business of the firm began to expand, others were engaged, as required, through the means of advertisements in the Clerkenwell local paper, in "The Builder," &c. But the scheme indicated in the circular, as below, was so unusual from its utter disregard of established conventions, and had caused so much dismay among trade circles, that men on the look-out for employment were for a long time afraid to come forward in response, being wary of identifying themselves with an undertaking on the face of it so hazardous, and such that obviously was foredoomed to failure. The firm, on their part, were anxious to exclude the merely commercial element, and required of all who joined in their work fair evidence, at least, of artistic appreciation beyond the ordinary standard.

The first step the firm took to make their existence known to the public was to send forth a circular in which they explained their aims. The purport of this document was that "a company of historical artists had banded

themselves together to execute work in a thoroughly artistic and inexpensive manner; and that they had determined to devote their spare time to designing for all kinds of manufactures of an artistic nature." In our days—so far have conditions been modified and views progressed—a notice of this sort would excite but little comment. Yet in the period when the decorative arts, as then practised, were understood to be a mere polite accomplishment for young ladies who had no better occupation to keep them amused; and when also the line of demarcation between the gentleman, the man, that is, who did nothing to earn his bread, and the business man was drawn with uncompromising sharpness, it was not to be wondered at if the announcement came with the provocation and force of a challenge, and dumbfounded those who read it at the audacity of the venture. The amount of prejudice it aroused would scarcely be believed at the present time. Professionals felt themselves aggrieved at the intrusion, as they regarded it, of a body of men whose training had not been strictly commercial into the close premises of their own peculiar domain; and, had it been possible to form a ring and to exclude Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. from the market, the thing would infallibly have been done. But if from without there was much bad blood to encounter and live down, the enthusiasm that reigned among themselves and inspired the courageous little band of pioneers—for they were indeed no less than that—was such that it is difficult to form any conception of it at this distance of time. Pioneers! Nay, Morris and his fellow-workers must have felt themselves to be something far exceeding that;—no mere Columbus was Morris, guiding the helm of his craft to the discovery and exploitation of some already existing land:—no, but since he and they that followed his leadership were actually constructing by their own efforts a new and unknown territory which before had had no being, theirs was rather the divine joy of creating, a joy that is given to none but to an artist, himself a creator, to appreciate. "Ah! but those were grand times," remarked one who has worked with the

firm from the very commencement. Furthermore, a thing rarer then than nowadays, there was an all but unlimited freedom of criticism admitted on both sides, between employers and employed, a freedom that virtually amounted to equality of condition between them.

The approaching International Exhibition in London, 1862, and the prospect of being represented worthily thereat, gave the newly-founded firm a definite motive for rallying together and an extra incentive, if it were possible, to strenuous exertion. To meet the pressure of work thereby entailed, the staff of Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. was increased towards the end of 1861; the new-comers being Messrs. Albert and Harry Goodwin and Weigand. The latter assisted Rossetti in the decoration of Mr. Seddon's cabinet, and was taken on ultimately as a regular worker in the firm. Finding themselves in need of additional help also in preparing the glass in hand for exhibition, the firm advertised in "The Builder" of November 9th, 1861, for "a first-rate fret glazier wanted." This led to the engaging of Mr. Charles Holloway, who has since become a painter.

Practically no particulars of the exhibits of Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. are to be gathered from the Official Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition of 1862, printed for her Majesty's Commissioners. It contains but two meagre entries of objects shown by the firm, viz., "Exhibit No. 5783: Decorated furniture, tapestries, &c.," and "Exhibit No. 6734: Stained glass windows." The report of the juries and list of awards witnesses that a medal (United Kingdom) was bestowed on the firm for their work in either class. In the case of the stained glass the award was given "for artistic qualities of colour and design," while in the case of their contributions to the class for furniture and upholstery, paper-hangings, &c., the record runs: "Messrs. Morris and Co. have exhibited several pieces of furniture, tapestries, &c., in the style of the Middle Ages. The general forms of the furniture, the arrangement of the tapestry, and the character of the details are satisfactory to the archæologist from the exactness of the imitation, at the same time that the general effect is excellent."

This recognition, scanty and inadequate as it was, from the authorities, was not allowed to pass unchallenged. The hostility displayed in certain quarters was of the most determined character. Opponents of the firm even went the length of starting a petition to get the work disqualified, on the ground that it was other than it professed to be. In particular they maintained, and that with a dogged obstinacy which did little credit to their own acquaintance with technique, that Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.'s stained glass was not new work or new material at all, but in reality old glass touched up for the occasion—that it was, in plain language, a fraud. But misunderstandings on the part of brother-artists and more bitter jealousy on the part of the trade were of little avail. The awards of the official judges were upheld. And perhaps, after all, the animosity of rivals afforded really testimony the strongest and the most valuable, just because it was involuntary, to the very remarkable qualities of the work which the firm, during so brief a period of existence, had succeeded in producing. At least one expert, Mr. Clayton, of the firm of Clayton and Bell, and formerly a fellow-student with Rossetti at the Royal Academy Schools, when he came to adjudicate, pronounced the work of Messrs. Morris and Co. to be the finest of its kind in the Exhibition.

Before the close of the Exhibition orders were received through Mr. Bodley, then a generous friend and supporter of the firm, for glass for St. Michael's, Brighton, and also for another new church, built in 1862, viz., All Saints', Selsley, a fresh district formed out of the parish of King Stanley in Gloucestershire. The design for the latter church comprises some square quarries with fine circular ornament and delicate yellow stain, in the execution of which quarries Morris personally bore a share. To help in this work an ordinary glazier was engaged to cut and glaze the glass. Another order that followed shortly after was for glass for Bradford, Yorkshire.

During their first year Mr. J. P. Seddon, the architect, had commissioned Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. to decorate a cabinet made from his own design.

This was one of the earliest works undertaken by the firm, and was included among the furniture shown at the Exhibition of 1862. It is still in Mr. Seddon's possession. "The subjects proposed for the decoration of this cabinet," says a note by the editor of "The Century Guild Hobby Horse," October, 1888, "being Architecture, Painting, Sculpture and Music, Mr. Ford Madox Brown suggested a series of imaginary incidents in the 'Honeymoon' of King René by which to express them, that king having been skilled in all these arts; Mr. Madox Brown himself designing the 'Architecture,' while the other subjects were invented by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Mr. Burne-Jones. . . . The cabinet . . . is Gothic in character, and made of oak, polished and inlaid with woods of various colours; the hinges being of metal, painted. The face of the lower portion, which rests immediately upon the ground and forms the greater bulk of the cabinet, contains four panelled doors, the central two of which project slightly beyond those which are at either end. On the panel of the door to the extreme left is painted in oils the design significant of Architecture. . . . Upon the gold background is a pattern of lines and dots, and above the figures is set the kind of canopy represented in mediæval manuscripts," a trefoiled arch, the spandrels of which contain, within circles, shields with the arms of King René, &c. "This background and canopy is repeated in the three other panels. The dress of the king is of a purplish red, lined with blue, his shoes of scarlet; while the white dress of the queen is edged with dark fur, and embroidered with red and blue flowers done in outline. The two panels of the projecting central portion of the cabinet were painted by Mr. Burne-Jones. In the first of these, the king is shown drawing the figure of a woman, as his queen stands over him; in the third panel he is at work carving a statue, while the attitude of the queen would seem to express astonishment at his art. The remaining panel on the right, representing 'Music,' was designed by Rossetti. Here the queen is seated, playing at a kind of regal, or chamber organ, the bellows of which are blown by King René. She is in a dress of

green ; and, as she is playing, a cloak of fur, lined with orange, falls from her shoulders, as the king bends over the instrument to kiss her." The six small panels in the upper part contain half-length single figures painted, representing various arts and professions :—iron-smelting, horticulture, embroidery, pottery-making, weaving, and glass-making. " One of them is at a frame, embroidering ; another, wearing a wimple, weaves a chequered cloth." The first and last are male figures. Part of the decoration was done also by Mr. Val. Prinsep. Yet another cabinet, produced later, should be mentioned ; a high one, for the design and execution of which the firm was responsible ; the subject of the panel decoration, " Green Summer," being the work of Burne-Jones.

But of Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.'s exhibits at the Exhibition of 1862 neither the least interesting nor the least beautiful was a piece of furniture, now in private ownership, a cabinet, raised on a stand and furnished with doors, both the designing and the painting of the four panels being the work of William Morris's own hand. His original pen-and-ink studies belong to Mr. Fairfax Murray. The subject is the legend of St. George, the series beginning with the royal proclamation and surrender of the victim to the dragon, and ending with the triumphal return of St. George with the rescued maiden ; it does not, however, include the oft-repeated subject of the combat with the dragon. While Morris was engaged upon this work at Red Lion Square, he received a visit from the master of his old school at Walthamstow, Dr. Guy, who was not only delighted but astonished at the work offered for the inspection of himself and the friends who accompanied him ; a fact which goes to prove what has already been stated, viz., that there was no tradition of the extraordinary artistic powers Morris developed when he grew up having been manifested or even suspected in him in boyhood.

If Morris's position at the head of affairs at Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.'s had hitherto not been appreciated, the mark that, owing to his guiding

genius, the firm made at the Exhibition left no doubt as to his real importance. At a social gathering at the Red House, to which, after the close of the Exhibition, Morris invited all the members of the firm, partners and staff in a body, he seemed instinctively to be acknowledged with one accord as occupying the leading place. The entire direction thenceforward was virtually in his hands, and he applied himself unremittingly to the task. When, in 1865, the firm removed from their original quarters to No. 26, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, Mr. Morris left Upton and took up his residence under the same roof. The house being a large one, the accommodation was sufficient, and, by living thus on the spot, he was enabled to devote still more of his time to superintending the industries carried on by the firm. But although he was, for all intents and purposes, in command of the whole business, he did not become the formal and official head until 1874. In the summer of that year, the original partnership was dissolved, Mr. Theodore Watts taking an active part in the arrangement of the affair. Mr. Morris then bought out the other partners and himself remained as sole representative of the Company, styled thenceforward simply Morris and Co. A fresh notice was issued to announce the change in the firm and to explain that the character of its work would remain unchanged, Burne-Jones continuing as before to furnish cartoons for stained glass. But one must not anticipate. Towards the beginning of 1865 Mr. Warrington Taylor came into the business, in the capacity of acting manager under Mr. Morris, and was of great service to the firm, while he lived; for, unhappily, in a few years' time he was carried off by consumption. He was succeeded by Mr. George Wardle, who had formerly acted as his assistant, and who remained in conduct of affairs from the death of Mr. Taylor for a considerable time—in fact, until within about six or seven years ago, when he resigned and went abroad. The names of some others who have, in the past, been workers on behalf of the firm may be mentioned: Messrs. Fairfax Murray, Charles Napier Hemy, James Egan, Fletcher, Wilday, and the Misses Faulkner.

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With reference to the remarks in the official report of the Exhibition of 1862, it should be observed that in the early days of Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., their productions, though far from being merely imitative, presented a greater degree of resemblance to mediæval work than they came to have in later times, when Morris's distinctly characteristic style had matured. Thus, in the powderings and diaperings of draperies, backgrounds, &c., for stained glass, the firm, about the middle of the sixties, made some use of a collection of ancient examples of decorations copied from different churches in Norfolk and Suffolk. These patterns and details of ornaments from paintings on walls and roofs, mouldings and carved wood-work, &c., including a series of figures of the angelic hierarchy from the rood-screen of St. Michael's Church, Barton Turf, Norfolk (date c. 1430), and some figures of saints, also of the fifteenth century, from Cawston Church in the same county, were selected and drawn by Mr. G. Wardle. Executed in pencil, and in many instances coloured, with a rare mastery of draughtsmanship, upon tracing paper, mounted on cards and enclosed in three portfolios, this valuable set of designs was acquired in the years 1866 and 1867 for the National Art Library at the South Kensington Museum.

When first the firm started to execute stained glass, Mr. Morris himself had no practical experience of the technicalities of the art. Madox Brown had previously made one design for the purpose, viz., the Transfiguration, for Messrs. Powell and Sons; while Burne-Jones, it is true, had already projected a course of instructions on the subject at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street, and had even designed a small quantity of glass, *e.g.*, for Waltham Abbey Church, as well as the St. Frideswide window in the Latin Chapel at Christ Church. To the lot of neither of these, however, did it fall, but to another member of the firm, Mr. Webb, to test the proficiency of their foreman, Mr. Campfield, who, having been employed for a short time by a firm of stained glass manufacturers, was entrusted with the getting together the

necessary plant and with the arranging of the working details at the commencement. A small kiln for firing the glass was constructed in the basement of the premises at Red Lion Square, and they set to work. Of course Mr. Morris was not content to stand by and watch other people engaged in a craft in which himself had no part. So he took up the work, and practised painting glass quarries, with the rest. It came to be the custom for the choice of the particular diapers and borders for draperies, &c., to be left to the artist who actually executed the glass-painting, but it was reserved for Morris to determine the scheme of colouring in each case. And when also it is remembered that Burne-Jones was not in the habit of inserting the lead-lines in his cartoons, and that Madox Brown did so only occasionally, one can understand how much remained over and above for Morris and his assistants to do to adapt the designers' monochrome drawings for practical execution.

The stained glass shown by the firm at the Exhibition consisted of some few pieces for domestic purposes, ornamental quarries, and a set of seven panels, designed by Rossetti, to illustrate the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in the Vineyard. This series was erected eventually in the east window of St. Martin's on the Hill, Scarborough, through the recommendation of Mr. G. F. Bodley, who built the church, and entrusted a considerable part of the internal decoration to Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. The pulpit was decorated by the firm, two panels in it being painted by Rossetti himself. The mural painting above the altar was also, in its original state, the work of the firm, but having fallen into a ruinous condition, it has since been completely repainted by local painters. "The first impression," says M. Olivier Georges Destrée, a Belgian writer, in "The Savoy" of October, 1896, "given by the window of the Parable of the Vineyard, which lights the choir, is an impression of colour, dazzling and magnificent, velvety and harmonious, resembling the Flemish stained glass windows decorating the Gothic cathedrals. From the point of view of stained glass, this is the one I

... were considered essential by Madox Brown, and all these qualities are united in a high degree of perfection. In fact, when we approach this window and examine it in detail, we perceive that it is no less remarkable for its ingenious and original composition than for the sensation of opulent colour which it at first gave us. ... Sumptuous in colour, ingenious in composition, the window of the Parable" is a design highly characteristic of Rossetti, while the figures of Adam and Eve in another window are equally characteristic designs of Ford Madox Brown. The subject of the "most beautiful and impressive" lancets, which are situated at the west end of the church, should be described more correctly as Adam and Eve in Paradise before the Fall. The date of them is 1862. "One is struck by the ingenious arrangement of the branches and leaves by which" the artist "veils the nudity of the bodies of Adam and Eve, for the rosy colours of the flesh look brighter in the violent contrast with the uniform blue of the sky seen behind them; and these ingenious contrasts give to these two nude bodies a vividness of life which is rendered by no other stained glass window which I have ever seen. These resplendent bodies of Adam and Eve illuminate the church, and seem to give it some of their own life. The composition is no less original and new in its details than in the beauty of its colouring. Adam is depicted standing, picturesquely leaning on a branch of a tree with large sombre leaves, a fig-tree I think; with the tip of his foot he amuses himself by tickling a small bear curled up at his feet; the blue sky is seen behind him, and sunflowers, flowering at the end of their long stems, expand at his right hand; in the branches of the tree above him a curious and familiar squirrel watches him. Standing also, Eve has stopped in the middle of a field richly studded with small flowers and red poppies; of the same fairness as the hair and beard of Adam, her unbound hair falls in an opulent stream over her shoulders. In her arms she holds, tenderly pressed to her bosom, a white dove, and in the sombre tree above, his eyes fixed



FIGURE OF ADAM (FROM WINDOW
BY MORRIS AND CO.), ST. MARTIN'S,
SCARBOROUGH.

DESIGNED BY
FORD MADON
BROWN.



FIGURE OF EVE (FROM WINDOW
BY MORRIS AND CO.), ST. MARTIN'S,
SCARBOROUGH.

DESIGNED BY
FORD MADON
BROWN.

and shining, an owl surveys her. The predominant colours of this admirable window are flesh colour, dark green and light gold." Mr. William Sharp, describing the same windows, says, "A strict harmony of colour is maintained between the rich brown of the bear and squirrel, the varying green of the trees and foliage, the light golden hair and the flesh tints of Adam, the yellow sunflower, &c.; the same being observed in the Eve picture, where also one or two red flowers give a deeper contrast." On the ground, close behind Eve, crouches a tawny brown rabbit. "Above the windows of Adam and Eve," says M. Destrée, "the Annunciation, by Burne-Jones, which decorates the large rose-window, and the 'Angels playing musical instruments' of the nine smaller roses which surround it, form with the" rest of the glass "a remarkable and charming contrast. . . . White, azure blue and ruby are the colours principally and almost exclusively used" in this group of ten openings which form the rose. There is altogether an abundance of Morris glass in St Martin's, including, on the north side, figures of characters of the Old Testament, and, on the south, of saints of the Christian dispensation.

Rossetti's designs for stained glass, indeed, were not very numerous. He produced a specially fine cartoon, which was executed by the firm, the subject being Christ in majesty, surrounded by angels; but "his last composition of this class," writes Mr. William Sharp, was a memorial to his aunt, Miss M. M. Polidori, who died in 1867. It was erected in Christ Church, Albany Street, Regent's Park, and is the second window from the bottom of the nave on the right as one faces altarwards, "the colouring throughout being rich and harmonious." The subject is the Sermon on the Mount. It is divided into three compartments, each panel being surrounded by small square panes of white glass, ornamented uniformly with a many-petalled rose, painted with great delicacy in sepia, with yellow stain introduced here and there to heighten the effect of leaves and stalks.

In the north transept of St. Giles's Church, Camberwell, is a two-light window, erected in December, 1864. An

early example, it is of unusual interest, not only because of the introduction of canopies, a feature not too common in the glass of the firm, but also because, what is more important, the figure on the left was designed by Mr. Morris himself. It represents St. Paul, clothed in a blue robe, with white cloak, lined with green; the diapered background being of rich red glass. The figure of St. John Baptist on the right, against a blue background, diapered in similar manner, has a red-lined white cloak over his camel-hair vest. The small groups below represent severally St. Paul preaching and St. John baptizing. Besides ornamental quarries, of which he produced a great variety, Mr. Morris's own designs for stained glass were but few. One of his larger cartoons for this purpose is in the collection of Mr. Fairfax Murray. The subject is St. Mary Magdalene, the pattern upon her robe being remarkably elaborate and beautiful. Far more prolific as a designer of glass than either Rossetti or Morris was Ford Madox Brown, who between 1862 and 1875 must have supplied, according to Mr. F. M. Hueffer's estimate, over 150 designs for the use of the firm. Among Madox Brown's cartoons for glass, beside two subjects from the Legend of St. Martin, for the church of that dedication at Scarborough, may be mentioned Christ blessing little Children (1862); Abraham and Isaac, Isaac blessing Esau, SS. Paul, Elizabeth, John, and Matthew (1863); a magnificent set of six scenes (designed in 1864 and 1865) from the life and death of St. Oswald, now occupying the west window of St. Oswald's Church, Durham; a series representing the Legend of St. Edith, for Tamworth Church (1873); and two more subjects, the Incredulity of St. Thomas (1874), and Christ appearing to St. Mary Magdalene in the Garden (1875).

The church of St. Michael at Brighton, the very first which Mr. Bodley ever built, contains, in his opinion, some of the finest specimens of early Morris glass, designed, with the exception named below, by Burne-Jones. By the font, at the west end of the south transept of the original church—that is, of the church as Mr. Bodley built it; for



WINDOW IN ST. GILES'
CHURCH, CAMBER-
WELL.

FIGURE OF ST. PAUL.
DESIGNED BY WILLIAM
MORRIS.

EXECUTED BY MORRIS AND CO.

pictures, howsoever admired by American visitors, in the west window of New College Chapel, Oxford,—“stained glass does not admit of refined drawing; or else it is thrown away upon it. What it does admit of, and what above all things it imperatively requires, is fine colour” (Sir Joshua Reynolds’s glass, mentioned above, is mostly brown and drab): “and what it can admit of, and does very much require also, is invention, expression and good dramatic action. For this reason work by the greatest historical artists is not thrown away upon stained glass windows, because, though high finish of execution is superfluous, and against the spirit of this beautiful decorative art, yet, as expression and action can be conveyed in a few strokes equally as in the most elaborate art, on this side therefore stained glass rises to the epic height. . . . The cartoons of this firm are never coloured, that task devolving on Mr. Morris, the manager, who makes his colour (by selecting the glass) out of the very manufacture of the article. The revival of the mediæval art of stained glass dates back now some twenty years in the earliest established firms; nevertheless with the public it is still little understood; a general impression prevails that bright colouring is the one thing desirable. . . . The result of this is that the manufacturers, goaded on by their clients, and the fatal facility of the material (for all coloured glass is bright), produce too frequently kaleidoscopic effects of the most painful description.”

In some interesting notes on “Stained Glass, Ancient and Modern,” in the “Century Guild Hobby Horse” of October, 1887, Mr. John Aldam Heaton writes, “In Keble College the other day, a friend remarked, ‘we shall soon want a fresh set of Church restorations—to get rid of modern stained glass;’ and certainly the specimens before us justified the remark—a remark which brought to one’s mind all the gross vulgarity of colour, feebleness of execution, poverty of design, and general inanity of scheme, all overshadowed by a strong tendency towards greenish-jaundice, which characterizes ninety per cent. of all the

glass now being made for cathedrals, churches, and 'alas! also for houses."

"I am far indeed from wishing to include Mr. Morris's work in this condemnation, and as he doesn't make anything like a tenth of what is produced, I leave room for *some* respectable work by other makers: but this does not even veil the fact that the production of this splendid item of the decorator's art has fallen into *most* incompetent hands, and has become a prominent source of *de-decoration* to our buildings, and of annoyance and vexation to all men of cultivated taste. . . . The mere fact of modern glass being drawn on paper only, even by such accomplished designers as Mr. Burne-Jones, and then transferred to glass by copyists,—copyists whom one feels inclined to class as 'clerks,'—points at once to an inevitable and fatal element of inferiority. What would a man think, having given an order for a picture to an eminent artist, when he discovered that the eminent artist had only drawn it in chalk on paper, and then handed it over to his 'young man' to copy it in colours on canvas! Yet this is done universally in stained glass; whereby we at once lose 'touch,' sparkle, breadth and originality of handling, and get in exchange the mechanical monotony of the copyist; with this further mischief, that whereas the canvas or the panel may bear, and often with great advantage, the most minute detailing and stippling, as witness the work of Memling or Van Eyck, such work is fatal on glass, where translucency should be a prominent characteristic. . . . The copyist delights in a hard, wire-like, mechanical line, and is proud of it: the artist avoids it as he would a plague. The copyist, if he has projection to express, knows no way but stippling the whole surface—now light maybe, now dark, but everywhere stippled, suffering always from that most inartistic fault of not knowing where to stop: the mediæval artist, who always appears to have known and felt the qualities and capabilities of the material he was working in, saw at once that sparkle, translucency—*life*—disappear under excess of stippling, and so stopped very far short indeed of the whole surface—often didn't stipple at all.

Indeed, stained glass, theoretically, should be very much of the nature of a *sketch* by an able hand, vigorous in conception, strong in the handling of the principal forms, and slight as possible in mechanism of detail; practically, the glass should be variable in thickness, ribby, and full of air bubbles, so as to produce gradation of colour and enhance the jewel-like effect of its translucence: at least half of its surface should be left clean glass for the sun to shine through: no lines should be used and no 'matting' more than is absolutely necessary to express the intention; and the lead, broad and plentiful, should supply the place of darks."

Now, tested by these canons, the glass of the firm is pre-eminently satisfactory. It fulfils even that condition for which Mr. Heaton seems scarcely to recognize that credit is due to it. That Mr. Morris felt as keenly as anyone could feel the danger of glass executed by one man from the paper cartoon of another losing its spirit and finer qualities in the process of reproduction is a fact. And accordingly he made a special point of insisting on the literal preservation of every characteristic of the original design with the minutest fidelity possible. In every case for the faces and hands and the more important features, if not invariably for the remaining portions, he employed none but accomplished artists like Mr. Fairfax Murray, for example, or Mr. Campfield. It is not too much to assert that Mr. Murray's rendering of the Vyner memorial window at Christ Church, Oxford, from Sir Edward Burne-Jones's cartoons, could not have been surpassed had the execution of it been the actual work of the designer. If the system that prevailed at the time that Mr. Morris took the art in hand was that of mere dead copyism and obliteration of all character the originals might possess, he certainly was the leader to a more excellent way when he introduced the reform, now adopted, in theory at any rate, by all the best firms of stained glass manufacturers. The quality of the material employed was another important consideration with Morris, the pot metal being selected with the utmost care from the stock of Messrs. Powell and Sons, of White-

friars. In the early days exception was taken frequently to the greenish hue of the white glass in the windows of the firm. Mr. Morris, however, was not to be persuaded to deviate from the course he had adopted. It was not his fault if the inartistic custom of modern glass-makers had used the public to prefer a cold and harsh white to the subtler-toned and mellowed effects of the tinted glass he employed of deliberate purpose. He trusted that they would, in course of time, understand and approve what he did; as indeed it would seem that they have.

Another point to note in Morris glass is that, at the beginning, for faces, hands, &c., flesh-tint glass was used, a pale pot metal which would readily take yellow stain and could be modified with enamel colour when it was desired to depict hair, shading, and so on. The extreme delicacy of handling is indeed the reason why the finer details of some parts in early Morris glass have perished. A short period succeeded, in the early seventies, when white glass for flesh predominated; after which was resumed flesh-coloured metal again; stronger and darker, however, than formerly, and such that of late years, up to the present time, has continued deepening in intensity rather than the reverse. It is said that Morris was confirmed in his preference for this usage on seeing the large windows of the Nativity and Crucifixion, executed by the firm in 1888, from Sir Edward Burne-Jones's cartoons, for St. Philip's, Birmingham; for Morris was struck greatly with admiration for these splendid specimens of stained glass, held both by himself and by the designer for favourites among the many windows they had produced together. At St. Philip's the flesh tints are for the most part somewhat pronounced; those of the male figures in particular being of a dark brownish colour, strongly marked. It is not to be pretended that in the course of years there has been no change or development in the style of Morris glass. Nowhere perhaps is the contrast, both in scheme and colouring, illustrated more strikingly than in St. John's Church, Torquay, where the east and west windows are separated by an interval of many years. Nor to an unprejudiced mind can

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there be any question as to which of the two accords the better with the traditional character of stained glass, or which is the more appropriate for its ecclesiastical purpose: the east window, of early date, with its stately figures in rich-toned robes against a light background, or the recent west window, representing the nine choirs of Angels, crowded as it is with wings and draperies, of every gradation of colour from pink to lavender, a Burne-Jones picture every inch of it, albeit the material is glass. The same criticism applies, though perhaps in a lesser degree, to the glass at Morton Church, near Gainsborough, particularly to a window on the north side of the church, the subject being the stoning of St. Stephen, and to the east window, in which the pictorial rendering of sky and landscape might almost suggest a parallel to Munich glass. Moreover these windows tend to darken the church instead of admitting light. But happily this type is not the most general among the hundreds of windows produced by the firm from the designs of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the artist who has supplied them with by far the largest proportion of cartoons for their stained glass.

Among the superb windows designed by Burne-Jones it seems invidious to single out any one as the best, in derogation, as it were, of the others. In 1866 he designed some splendid glass for the east window of All Saints' Church, built by Mr. Bodley at Cambridge. Afterwards there followed, in the seventies, a whole series of windows in the neighbouring Chapel of Jesus College. Of these the finest is undoubtedly the large window in the south wall of the south transept. The subject is the celestial hierarchy, of every grade, and, next after them, man made in the image of God, occupying the batement lights and two tiers of the five large lights above the transom. Below are five virgin saints, viz.: SS. Ursula, Dorothea, Radegund, Cecilia and Catherine; and below these again, Bishop Alcock, founder of the College, between the four Latin Fathers, SS. Jerome and Gregory on the left, and SS. Ambrose and Augustine on the right. No reproduction can convey the glorious effect of colour, more especially of



WINDOW IN JESUS COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.

DESIGNED BY SIR E.
BURNES-JONES, BART.

EXECUTED BY MORRIS AND CO.



WYNER MEMORIAL WINDOW
CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

DESIGNED BY SIR E.
BURNÉ JONES, BART.
EXECUTED BY MORRIS AND CO.

the yellows, which range from palest amber to fiery orange in wings and other details of the composition. The south transept is lighted by two windows on either side, of three lights each; the scheme of subjects being the four Evangelists, one in the middle of each window, between two Sibyls, and smaller groups beneath from the life of our Lord. There are other fine windows by the firm in the nave—some half-hidden by the organ—and in the north transept: in all eleven Morris windows. It may be mentioned here that the firm was also employed under Mr. Bodley, to whose hands had been committed the restoration of the Chapel, to decorate the roof of the nave. For this purpose Morris himself designed a series of Angels holding scrolls inscribed with the *Vexilla Regis*. These were executed in tempera on either side of the coved roof.

Covering about the same period as the windows at Jesus College are four, also from Burne-Jones's designs, at Christ Church, Oxford; and it would be difficult to find more magnificent examples of Morris glass than three of the number. The earliest in date, a four-light window, contains large figures of Samuel, David, St. John, and Timothy. All in white vesture, relieved in parts with yellow diapering, they show up strikingly against a background of dark green foliage appearing over the top of a blue tapestry curtain. The pavement on which they stand is pale red, while the halos are of spoilt ruby glass, the effect of which, flecked with blood and flame colour, produced solely by the metal being coated without uniformity of surface, is remarkably rich and jewel-like. The flesh tints, perhaps by contrast to the white draperies, seem rather deep than otherwise. The colour scheme of the lower groups is mainly blue, bluish green, olive, amber and white. The next window, to the right of the last, is not less beautiful. It consists of three lights and represents St. Cecilia between two Angels. The red nimbus, the light flesh tints, the draperies all white except for the brownish purple lining of the robe of the right-hand figure, and the Angels' wings of pale blue, splashed here and there with yellow stain, make an exquisite contrast to the

rich green foliage and dark peacock-blue hangings draped in the background. The prevailing colours of the small groups below, from the life of the Saint, are blue, white and amber. At the east end of the south aisle of the choir is a window erected in 1877, representing St. Catherine between the Angel of Suffering and the Angel of Victory. Against a background of green foliage, of purple walls and dark blue curtains, the three figures stand all in white, the figure of the Saint peculiarly majestic. The Angels have spoilt ruby halos, the mutilated hands of the Angel on the left being veiled in a cloth of light cinnamon hue,—the same colour as the flames which the Angel on the opposite side is combating. Deeper tones prevail in the lower compartments, one of the floating Angels who carry the body of St. Catherine to her burial being of a ripe orange; while the glory of cherubim surrounding the Christ in the middle panel has an indescribable glow of ruby, purple and blue.

Among other windows of the firm may be named those in Peterhouse Combination Room at Cambridge, dating between 1869 and 1874. This room contains five windows of two lights each and a large bay window of six lights. The subject of the four windows on the north side is a series of poets from Homer to Milton, from designs by Madox Brown and Burne-Jones, upon a diamond quarried background. The two-light window on the south side represents King Edward I. and the founder, Hugh de Balsham, Bishop of Ely, designed by Madox Brown; while the bay window, on the same side of the room, illustrates Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women" from designs by Burne-Jones, the figures being portrayed in colours on a grisaille and yellow-stained background. In 1864 there were purchased for the South Kensington Museum four panels, by Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., three of them identical with the Peterhouse glass, viz., those which represent the poet Chaucer asleep, Dido and Cleopatra and the God of Love with Alceste. The fourth panel is a very beautiful head of Penelope, in the form of a medallion, within a wreath, upon a quarried ground of conventional floral pattern.



PAINTED GLASS, "PENELOPE."
(SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM).

EXECUTED BY MORRIS

THE MEDALLION DESIGNED BY
SIR E. BURNES JONES, BART.
& CO.

The west window of the Parish Church at Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, is filled with Morris glass, designed by Burne-Jones, and erected in 1874. The three large lights are occupied by symbolical representations of Faith, Hope, and Charity, similar in drawing to those in the west window of the south aisle at Christ Church, only that the figures at Oxford are strong in colour, whereas at Bishopsbourne they are clothed entirely in white, which gives them a totally different effect. A richer colour tone is concentrated in the lower part of the window, which contains crouching figures symbolical of the vices opposed to the three theological virtues; while in the two batement lights at the top are Angels playing on pipes. At St. Michael's, Torquay, is a fine east window designed by Burne-Jones; an allegorical treatment of the Crucifixion, with full-size figures of Mary and John on either side, and square panels underneath with scenes from the life of our Lord.

Next may be mentioned the Morris glass, designed by Burne-Jones, at Paisley Abbey: and also the window, designed by the same hand and executed in 1879, in the south choir aisle of Salisbury Cathedral;—the subject being two ministering and two praising Angels. In the early eighties Burne-Jones designed windows for the Savoy Chapel and for St. Peter's, Vere Street, and in 1885 for St. Giles's, Edinburgh. Thenceforward, nay, even before that date (for it is a fact that the late Dean Stanley was an admirer of the work of the firm and that Morris, had he chosen, might have obtained the order to execute stained glass for Westminster Abbey itself), it became a rare thing to find Morris glass inserted in any ancient building. There were of course special exceptions, as in places where glass of the firm existed already, and Mr. Morris was pressed to supply more *en suite* with the previous work; or where personal claims seemed to justify such a proceeding, as in the case of the village church of Rottingdean, the country home of Burne-Jones. It was indeed a matter of principle with Morris, who, in order to be in a position to protest against the terrible disfiguring

of old buildings by the introduction of wretched modern glass, &c., by others, had to set a consistent example and refrain himself. The pity of it was that this policy of his could not be guaranteed to effect the object he desired. For, given a person who has formed the generous determination to present a stained glass window—a memorial as often as not—to any particular church: suppose the capable firm has been offered and has refused the order, what is to hinder the intending donor from having recourse to some inferior firm of glass-makers, and thereby swelling the roll of deplorable defacements to ancient buildings? It is to be feared that Morris's conscientious scruples in this regard have made our land the poorer by the loss of many examples of stained glass which might else have been in existence. A Morris window of recent date, erected in 1895, and, from its dignified size, of no little importance (since it consists of as many as twelve lights), is the east window of Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street. The glass was designed by Burne-Jones, but it must be confessed that, as a conception, it is far from deserving to rank among that great artist's most successful achievements. Here was a grand and, one may say, a unique opportunity; one of the largest window surfaces in London, and such that had the further advantage of Mr. Sedding's beautiful tracery to serve as a basis for the ornamental glass. But who is prepared to maintain that the glass bears any sort of relation to the tracery it fills? Does not it consist rather of a collection of figures, which, since they are designed by one and the same hand, have, indeed, a strong family likeness, but no homogeneity of plan beyond being all displayed similarly upon a background of tapestry-like foliage? What material difference would a dozen more or less of such figures have made to the work as an ordered and cohesive composition? Nay, a sampler, like this one, of sacred iconography, is capable of almost any number of additions or subtractions without increasing or impairing to an appreciable degree its completeness as an organic whole. It is scarcely necessary to observe that, regarded by itself, every single figure is beautiful, as whatever

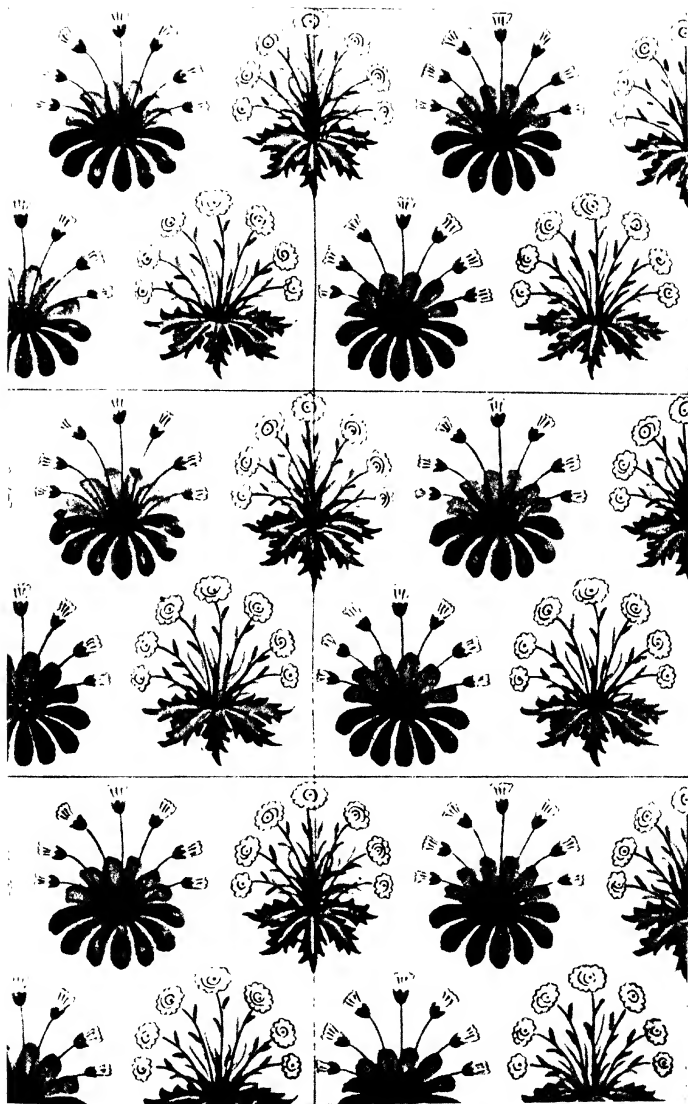
Burne-Jones draws is bound to be; but, taken into account the position they occupy, their scale is too small to be proportionate to the great size of the window, in which, surely, if anywhere, a large and broad treatment is what was required. These remarks are not intended to reflect in any sense upon the execution or quality of the glass, which is as perfect as one would wish, and quite worthy of the renowned firm that produced it.

The ceramic art, or rather that branch of it represented by the ornamentation of tiles, is another industry which owes its rescue from degradation to William Morris. "All nations, however barbarous," said he, in his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life" (published in 1882), "have made pottery; . . . but none have ever failed to make it on true principles, none have made shapes ugly or base till quite modern times. I should say that the making of ugly pottery was one of the most remarkable inventions of our civilization." A little further on Morris states the main principles that should regulate the ornamentation of fictiles. "As to the surface decoration on pottery, it is clear it must never be printed; . . . one rule we have for a guide, and whatever we do if we abide by it, we are quite sure to go wrong if we neglect it: and it is common to all the lesser arts. Think of your material. Don't paint anything on pottery save what can be painted only on pottery; if you do it is clear that however good a draughtsman you may be, you do not care about that special art. You can't suppose that the Greek wall-painting was anything like their painting on pottery—there is plenty of evidence to show that it was not. Or, take another example from the Persian art; it is easy for those conversant with it to tell from an outline tracing of a design whether it was done for pottery painting or for other work."

It was at the beginning of 1862, and some tiles were required for use at the Red House. But at that time there simply were no hand-painted tiles produced in this country. So Morris had to begin from the very beginning. Plain white tiles were imported by the firm from Holland, and

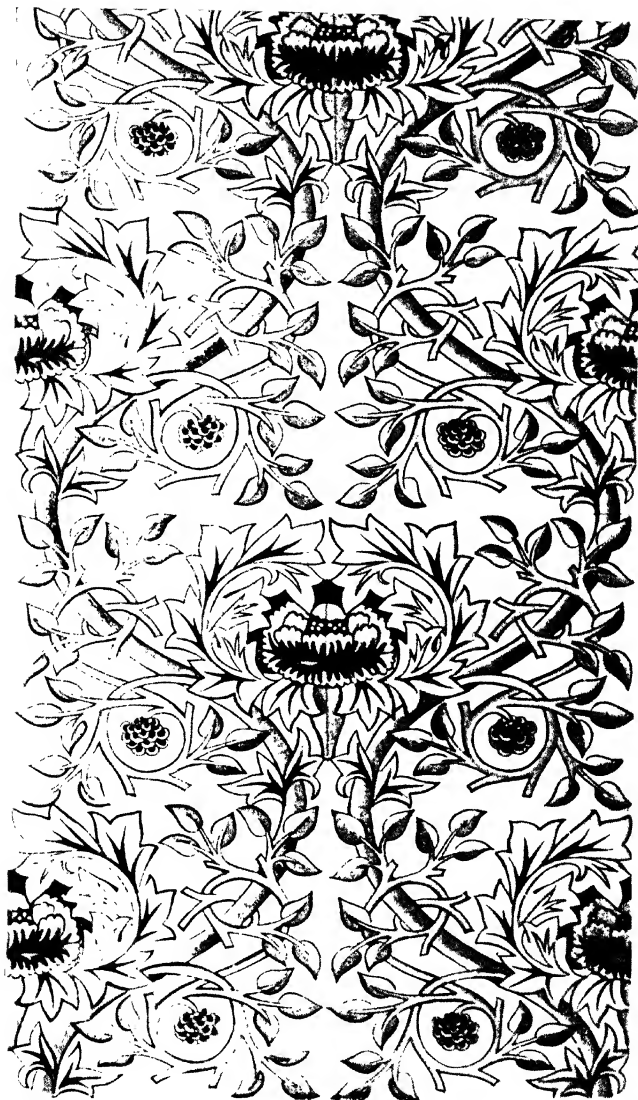
Morris, Faulkner and others set about experimenting with various glazes, enamels, &c., until the desired results were obtained. The same kiln that was used for firing the stained glass was made to serve for the tiles also. An iron muffle with iron shelves carried the glass in the middle part, while the tiles were so placed as to be exposed to the greatest heat, at the top and bottom. A small wind-furnace was employed for slips and for colour-testing experiments. Burne-Jones furnished the figure designs that were painted on the earliest tiles of the firm. These figures having first been outlined by others, Mr. Morris, with Mr. Faulkner's help, tinted in the flat surfaces with enamel colour. After the first firing a soft glaze of the firm's own composition was applied to the surface of the tiles.

A set of tiles, with figures of Adam and Eve, was painted in readiness for the Exhibition of 1862, and was in fact delivered and unpacked with a view to being exhibited. But when Mr. William Burges, the architect, saw them, he failed to appreciate the decorative value of some scrolls, with verses by Morris, that had been introduced into the composition. Whereupon, in order to avoid misunderstandings, Morris had the tiles removed from among the exhibits, without submitting them to the inspection of the hanging committee as a body. He was, however, far from being deterred in any way by this incident, and the production of hand-painted tiles continued to be from thenceforward one of the regular crafts of the firm. Among Burne-Jones's designs for tiles were a series to illustrate Chaucer's "Good Women," the story of Cinderella, a favourite subject which was reproduced repeatedly, and the legend of the Sleeping Beauty. Rossetti and Madox Brown also designed tiles for the firm. There was one set of designs—a joint production—representing the several occupations of the months and seasons of the year. Of these Madox Brown designed the pictures of tree-felling, seed-sowing, and sheep-shearing, while Morris himself designed a mower whetting his scythe. Morris designed in addition a



HAND-PAINTED TILES, THE "DAISY" PATTERN.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.



HAND PAINTED THES, THE
" ROSE " PATTERN.

DESIGNED BY
WILLIAM MORRIS.

patterns to surround the figure subjects for fireplaces, &c. Of these one which was used frequently was known as the "Swan" pattern. It has been said above that at first Morris and Faulkner used to paint tiles themselves; later Miss Lucy Faulkner undertook this branch of the work in place of her brother and Mr. Morris. Miss Kate Faulkner also painted tiles for the firm, and continued to do so until within a few years ago. After Miss Lucy Faulkner's marriage the firm produced but few figure-subject tiles; one of the last of these being a medallion tile presented by Mr. Morris to Baron Leys.

Effective use of tiles was made by Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. for internal decorations. The firm supplied tiles of figure panels surrounded by diaper ornament for the fireplace in the hall of Sandroyd House, Cobham, Surrey, a house Mr. Webb built for Mr. Stanhope shortly after Morris's Red House at Upton. It so happened that both owners gave up their respective houses within a short period of one another.

The two fireplaces in Peterhouse Combination Room were fitted in 1870 with Morris tiles, in the shape of figure panels on a floral diaper ground. The larger of the fireplaces has representations of the four seasons, with verses by Morris—the same which he published in "The Academy" of February 1st, 1871; while the panels in the smaller fireplace have figures of SS. Peter and George. The chimney-breast of the Hall at Queen's College, Cambridge, is decorated by the firm with hand-painted tiles, consisting of figure subjects upon a ground-work of blue diaper ornament, within a conventional border of the same colour. The figures represent the two royal foundresses, Margaret of Anjou and Elizabeth Woodville, designed by Madox Brown in 1873; the tutelary saints of the college, SS. Bernard and Margaret, and allegorical figures of the twelve months of the year.

It was owing in great measure to Mr. Morris's initiative that Mr. William de Morgan, now of Chelsea and Great Marlborough Street, took up the art. He worked for

a time in connection with Morris and Co. though his business was and is quite distinct from theirs. How he has revived and developed the exquisite Hispano-Moresque lustre for the painting of tiles and other fictile objects is well known to all artists and connoisseurs. Some early Morris tiles have suffered, owing probably to the use of glass browns and other glass colours, which, being very full of borax, are apt, under certain atmospheric conditions, to disintegrate. Messrs. Morris and Co. had no kiln for firing underglaze tiles; and the want was supplied by Mr. de Morgan, who executed on his own premises a number of their special designs.

The firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. had scarcely been in existence six years when they were commissioned to carry out the internal decorations of the Green Dining-Room at the South Kensington Museum. In this room are two windows, containing in all six panels, with figures, robed in white, designed by Burne-Jones in 1866 and 1867. These panels form a horizontal band across the windows, with roundels—another form of window decoration revived by Morris—above and below, of pale greenish white glass painted with a delicate pattern of conventional ornament. The walls of the dining-room are panelled with wood, painted green and rising from the floor to about half the height of the room. The upper panels are gilt, the majority of them being decorated with painted sprays of various trees and flowers, while at intervals are panels with decorative figures, in place of these floral designs, painted on them. It is characteristic of Mr. Morris's scrupulous thoroughness that, after the panels were finished, he came to the conclusion that the work, having been carried out by different painters, was not uniform enough in style to make a consecutive or harmonious scheme of decoration. Accordingly he insisted on having them all repainted almost afresh by the hand of Mr. Fairfax Murray. The wall-space above the panelling is covered with a conventional pattern of foliage in relief; and round the top runs a frieze with panels depicting a chase of animals.

From 1870 to 1873 Dr. Sandford, now Protestant titular

Bishop of Gibraltar, held the living of Bishopsbourne, (a country parish the associations of which possess an interest for some, because Richard Hooker, called "the judicious," was a former rector; the yew-trees planted by him being shown in the garden to this day), and Mr. Morris, as a friend of Dr. Sandford's, visited him at the Rectory and decorated the dining-room there (the same room in which Hooker died). The decoration is of simple character, consisting of a delicate conventional pattern stencilled on the plaster between the moulded rafters; a narrow scroll painted round the top of the wall immediately below the roof-beams; and a Gothic pattern, brighter in colour and more solid than the rest, stencilled upon the panels of the dado.

Of the many industries connected with the name of Morris, none has more universal celebrity than that of wall-paper hangings; and rightly so. For it was Morris who made this a truly valuable branch of domestic ornamentation; Morris, who elevated it from the level of a temporary expedient of no great account to be a craft of the first rank. If in some other instances he was rather the restorer and infuser of fresh life into arts fallen into degeneracy, he was nothing short of a creator in the case of wall-paper design, which, as a serious decorative art, owes its existence to him before anyone else. The youngest in point of date, it is yet, of all the art industries of the present time, not far from being the most satisfactory, regarded from the standpoint of taste. It has commanded the services of the very foremost of decorative artists amongst us, of Messrs. Voysey and Butterfield, Walter Crane, Lewis Day, and Heywood Sumner, Mawson, the late Mr. A. Silver, and many more beside.

The importance of paying due regard to the artistic treatment of our wall spaces is a matter on which Morris has insisted in his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," wherein he says, "Whatever you have in your rooms, think first of the walls; for they are that which makes your house and home; and if you don't make some sacrifice in their favour, you will find your chambers have a kind of makeshift, lodging-house look about them, how-

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ever rich and handsome your movables may be." Thus much for the general principle. Coming to details, "I suppose I am bound," writes Morris, "to say something on the quite modern and very humble, but, as things go, useful art of printing patterns on paper for wall hangings. But really there is not much to be said about it, unless we were considering the arrangement and formation of its patterns; because it is so very free from those difficulties the meeting and conquering of which give character to the more intricate crafts. I think the real way to deal successfully with designing for paper-hangings is to accept their mechanical nature frankly, to avoid falling into the trap of trying to make your paper look as if it were painted by hand. Here is the place, if anywhere, for dots and lines and hatchings: mechanical enrichment is of the first necessity in it. After that you may be as intricate and elaborate in your pattern as you please; nay, the more and the more mysteriously you interweave your sprays and stems the better for your purpose, as the whole thing has to be pasted flat on a wall, and the cost of all this intricacy will but come out of your own brain and hand. For the rest, the fact that in this art we are so little helped by beautiful and varying material imposes on us the necessity for being specially thoughtful in our designs; every one of them must have a distinct idea in it; some beautiful piece of nature must have pressed itself on our notice so forcibly that we are quite full of it, and can, by submitting ourselves to the rules of art, express our pleasure to others, and give them some of the keen delight that we ourselves have felt. If we cannot do this in some measure our paper design will not be worth much; it will be but a makeshift expedient for covering a wall with something or other; and if we really care about art we shall not put up with 'something or other,' but shall choose honest whitewash instead, on which sun and shadow play so pleasantly, if only our room be well planned and well shaped, and look kindly on us." In the lecture, "Making the Best of it," with reference to the structure of patterns, Morris makes some general observations, which, however,

apply in a peculiar degree to wall-paper design : " Whereas it has been said that a recurring pattern should be constructed on a geometrical basis, it is clear that it cannot be constructed otherwise ; only the structure may be more or less masked, and some designers take a great deal of pains to do so. I cannot say that I think this always necessary. It may be so when the pattern is on a very small scale, and meant to attract but little attention. But

is sometimes the reverse of desirable in large and important patterns, and, to my mind, all noble patterns should at least *look* large. Some of the finest and pleasantest of these show their geometrical structure clearly enough ; and if the lines of them grow strongly and flow gracefully, I think they are decidedly helped by their structure not being elaborately concealed. At the same time, in all patterns which are meant to fill the eye and satisfy the mind, there should be a certain mystery. We should not be able to read the whole thing at once, nor desire to do so, nor be impelled by that desire to go on tracing line after line to find out how the pattern is made, and I think that the obvious presence of a geometrical order, if it be, as it should be, beautiful, tends towards this end, and prevents our feeling restless over a pattern. That every line in a pattern should have its due growth, and be traceable to its beginning . . . is undoubtedly essential to the finest pattern work ; equally so is it that no stem should be so far from its parent stock as to look weak or wavering. . . . Everyone who has practised the designing of patterns knows the necessity for covering the ground equably and richly. This is really to a great extent the secret of obtaining the look of satisfying mystery aforesaid, and it is the very test of capacity in a designer. Finally, no amount of delicacy is too great in drawing the curves of a pattern, no amount of care in getting the leading lines right from the first, can be thrown away, for beauty of detail cannot afterwards cure any shortcoming in this. Remember that a pattern is either right or wrong. It cannot be forgiven for blundering. . . . It is with a pattern as with a fortress, it is no stronger than its weakest point.

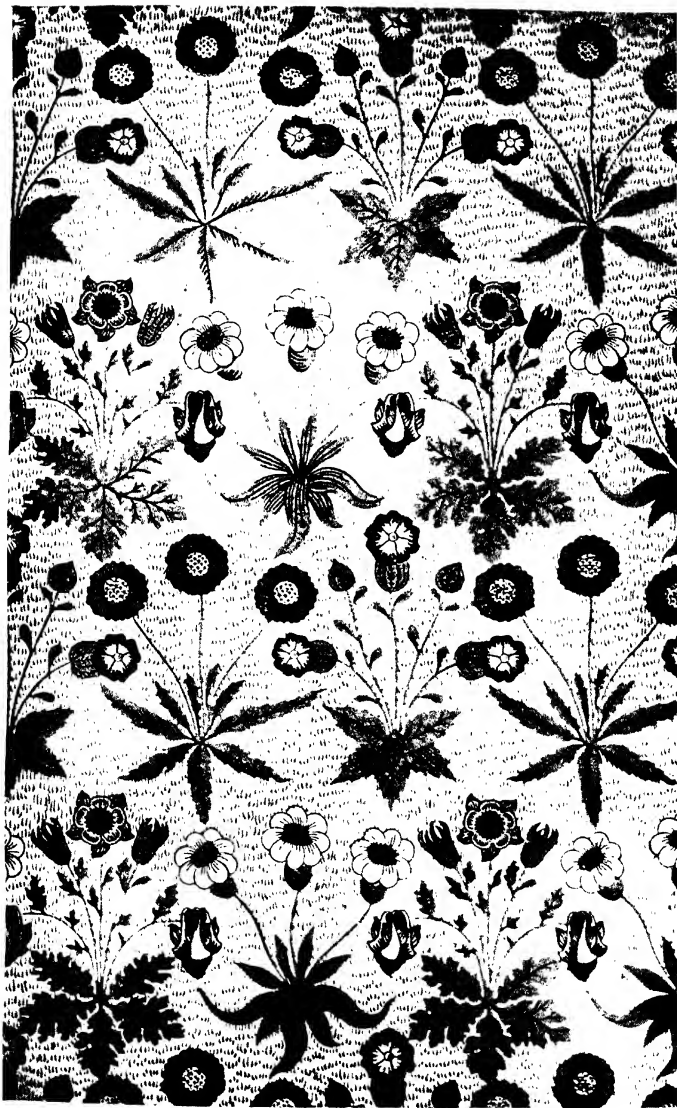
A failure for ever recurring torments the eye too much to allow the mind to take any pleasure in suggestion and intention."

"As to the second moral quality of design, meaning, I include in that the invention and imagination which forms the soul of this art, as of all others, and which, when submitted to the bonds of order, has a body and a visible existence. Now . . . form may be taught, but the spirit that breathes through it cannot be. So I will content myself with saying this on these qualities, that though a designer may put all manner of strangeness and surprise into his patterns, he must not do so at the expense of beauty. You will never find a case in this kind of work where ugliness and violence are not the result of barrenness, and not of fertility of invention. The fertile man, he of resource, has not to worry himself about invention. He need but think of beauty and simplicity of expression; his work will grow on and on, one thing leading to another, as it fares with a beautiful tree. . . . No pattern should be without some sort of meaning. True it is that that meaning may have come down to us traditionally, and not be our own invention, yet we must at heart understand it, or we can neither receive it, nor hand it down to our successors. It is no longer tradition if it is servilely copied, without change, the token of life. You may be sure that the softest and loveliest of patterns will weary the steadiest admirers of their school as soon as they see that there is no hope of growth in them. For you know all art is compact of effort, of failure and of hope, and we cannot but think that somewhere perfection lies ahead, as we look anxiously for the better thing that is to come from the good. Furthermore, you must not only mean something in your patterns, but must also be able to make others understand that meaning. . . . Now the only way in our craft of design for compelling people to understand you is to follow hard on Nature; for what else can you refer people to, or what else is there which everybody can understand? everybody that it is worth addressing yourself to, which includes all people who can feel and think."

In the manufacture of hand-printed wall-papers it was Morris's original intention to use zinc plates prepared by a method somewhat akin to process engraving at the present day, which however proved too slow and laborious to be practicable. Morris therefore had to have recourse to the ordinary mode of block-cutting; and the firm engaged the services of a block-cutter named Barrett of Bethnal Green, who undertook to execute the wood-blocks under the personal supervision of Mr. Morris. Again, in the matter of the printing, Morris's plan was to obtain more varied and artistic effects with transparent pigments instead of the solid body colours then in general use for the purpose. The production of paper-hangings has now reached so advanced a stage of development that there is not the smallest difficulty in the employment of wash tints, but in those early days the scheme could not be carried out. Indeed, but a brief period of trials on their own account convinced the firm of the expediency of transferring the manufacture of wall-papers bodily—the block-cutting as well as the printing—from their own premises to the experienced hands of Mr. Metford Warner, the acting principal of Messrs. Jeffrey and Co., Essex Road, Islington. The result was so satisfactory that the arrangement has been allowed to continue to this day. Messrs. Jeffrey and Co. have a separate department which they reserve exclusively for the carrying out of the work entrusted to them by Morris and Co., the paper-hangings so produced remaining, as it is perhaps scarcely necessary to say, the sole property of the latter.

The designs, with comparatively few exceptions, have always been drawn by William Morris himself. The first wall-paper to be designed, though it came third in order of production, consists of a trellis, which gives its name to the pattern, intertwining roses, somewhat stiff in growth, and brown birds here and there among the branches. Morris diffidently refrained from designing the bird forms with his own hand, preferring to have them drawn by Mr. Philip Webb. The earliest Morris wall-paper issued was the "Daisy," a quaint pattern consisting of plant-groups

of daisies, columbines, &c., dotted at regular intervals on the field, in a manner so formal as none but a master of design could have ventured to do, nor certainly anyone else have achieved success in doing. Here then, with a frankness which in a designer less gifted must have produced inevitably results both harsh and crude, Morris has accepted the mechanical limitations of his craft and has triumphed in that accepting. The dexterity involved in a design like this is such that few perhaps would suspect. Yet if that saying be true, *Ars est celare artem*, then this is a consummate work of art. Some of Morris's patterns may possibly lend themselves to adaptation or—not to mince matters—to imitation, but this at least is out of reach, its virtues incommunicable. It has a delicacy of touch about it, a character all its own. The colours employed in it are neither few in number nor low in tone, and yet they are combined with such judgment that the harmony of the whole is perfect. There be Morris papers which, subordinate in scheme of colouring and undemonstrative of line, admit readily enough of accessory ornaments in the way of china, pictures, and so on. But the "Daisy" pattern is not of the number of these. It gives a room in which it may be hung an air of distinction and completeness that seems to deprecate any further embellishment. In a word, the "Daisy" is a marvel of supreme cleverness; and withal one of which the popularity declines no whit as time goes by. It is a startling evidence of the strength and enduring vitality of Morris's work that a design of his like this should have lost none of its charm and freshness after having been before the public for over thirty years. It is to this day among those most in demand, if not actually itself the most in demand of all his wall-papers. The second paper brought out by the firm was named the "Fruit," a design of stiff diagonal branches contrasting with the roundness of apples and pomegranates and the freer shapes of leaves and blossoms. After the "Trellis" Morris's next designs brought out were the "Diaper," the "Scroll," and the "Branch," of which none calls for any special remark. The "Larkspur" followed, in one print



THE "DAISY" WALL PAPER.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS

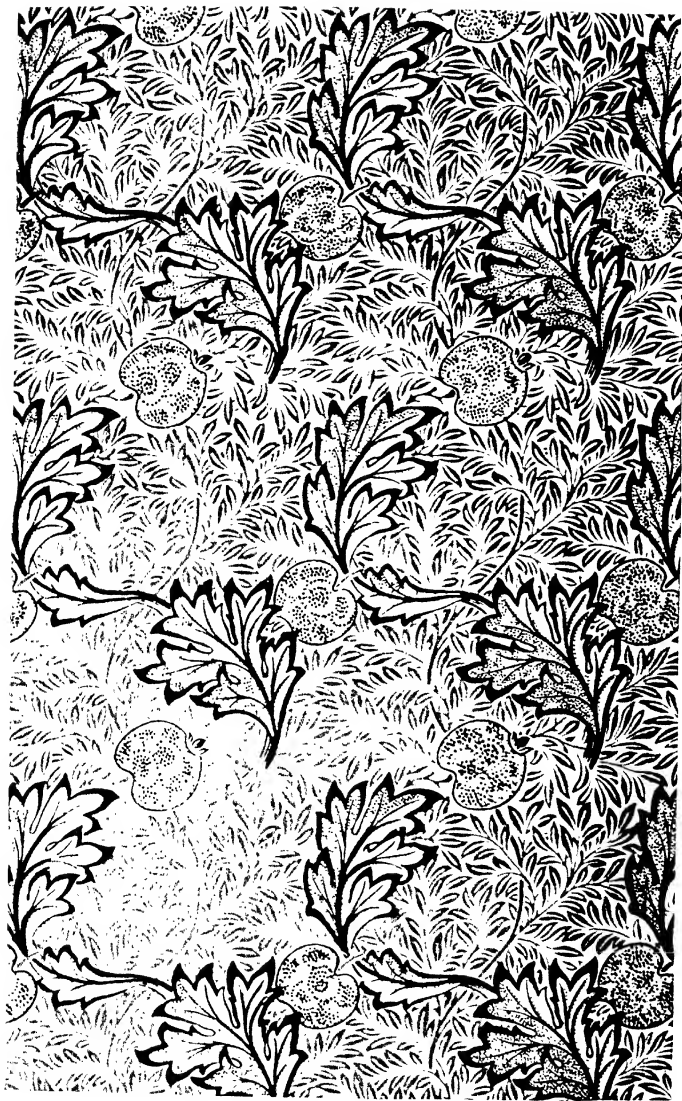


THE "MARIGOLD" WALL-PAPER

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS

on a white ground, a very characteristic and beautiful pattern, with firmly-drawn leafage, the convolutions of which aptly illustrate Morris's remarks, quoted above, about the importance of getting one's curves true in a pattern. No more noble instance than this could be found of the value of careful draughtsmanship. The design contains also larkspur flowers and roses, not however very conspicuous. The name of the "Jasmine" indicates sufficiently the subject of the next design, which is in several colours. Then comes a peculiarly beautiful, if severe, design called the "Marigold," a single print, the pattern showing light upon a deeper toned ground. It has certain qualities of drawing in common with the "Larkspur," and yet set side by side, the two designs are quite distinct. Both, however, possess in a marked degree that indefinable sense of immortality which is the property of the best work in every age. Produced years ago they seem nevertheless as new as if they had been designed only yesterday. Though other designs should wax old and perish with the transient phases and fashions whose reflection they are, there is no danger of these at any rate ever becoming antiquated, or failing to fulfil the desire of human beings that crave for permanent beauty; and that just because they bear no label of place or period, but have in themselves a life that is free and independent of every change of time and circumstance. There is hardly need to say that it is not intended to limit the application of these remarks to the particular designs of Morris's which occasioned them. Only it happens that his wall-paper patterns, being both numerous and varied, furnish more typical instances than are to be met with in any one other branch of his art. After the "Marigold" came his "Lily" pattern, recalling in some sort the "Daisy;" then the "Powdered," and after that the "Willow." The last is a handsome design of willow-sprays upon an under-printed background of hawthorn blossoms. Next in order is the "Vine," a fine design which was reproduced later with bronze colouring. The "Acanthus" is a magnificent design. The grand sweep of the foliage, the rich and varied gradations of its colouring

combine to produce a sumptuous effect which indicates the highest attainable point in paper staining, and such that could scarcely be surpassed even in tapestry-weaving. The pattern is so elaborate that it requires a double set of blocks and cannot be produced with less than thirty-two printings. It was made first in red, afterwards in a similar combination of green tones, and still more recently in yellowish browns. The "Pimpernel," the "Wreath," and the "Rose" preceded the "Chrysanthemum," a large and handsome pattern in many colours, and next, the "Apple." The last has a leaf which forms a prominent feature together with the fruit upon a background of willow leaves. There followed next a ceiling-paper in one print, consisting of floral forms, necessarily rigid in arrangement. Afterwards came the "Sunflower," the "Acorn," the "Poppy," and the "Carnation." Next an order for St. James's Palace evoked a very splendid wall-filling of conventional forms on a large scale and roses introduced in a less prominent manner, the whole printed in an elaborate scheme of colouring. The St. James's ceiling, designed to go with the last-named, is a large pattern, printed, however, in one colour only. The "Bird and Anemone" is a replica of a design for cretonne. The "Grafton" was succeeded by a ceiling-paper in which boldness of effect is in no way sacrificed, in spite of its being in several colours and altogether of a less simple character than the former ones. The "Wild Tulip" followed, a striking pattern with a large leaf, of which the form is emphasized by the ingenious use of dots; the background being also dotted. The composition includes a flower not unlike that in the above-mentioned "Poppy" pattern. Mr. Morris's next wall-paper was the "Fritillary," which has a very marked leaf and some points of resemblance to the "Wild Tulip" design. Next is the "Garden Tulip" pattern, which consists of a tulip spray strongly accentuated by the slight and almost thin treatment of the background; next the "Lily and Pomegranate," a design which includes also marigolds—a stiff pattern in many colours with a dotted ground; next the "Willow Bough," a more naturalistic



THE "APPLE" WALL-PAPER.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

treatment than the earlier "Willow;" and next one named the "Merton," of no particular importance. The above were followed by the "Bruges," a superb design which it is impossible to praise in terms too high. Though entirely original in detail, its general aspect is more thoroughly Gothic and traditional than that of anything Morris ever produced in the way of repeated ornament. Conceived on broad mediæval lines, it forms a decoration which, upon the walls of a fifteenth century building, is in perfect accord with its surroundings. More in its favour could not well be said. Itself diagonal in plan, the "Bruges" was followed by a doubled pattern called "Autumn Flowers;" and then by the "Borage" ceiling-paper, a design in one print. The "Norwich" wall-paper is another instance of the effective use that may be made of dots in this class of design. Conventionalized peonies, roses, &c., are here rendered in an elaborate scheme of colouring. The "Wall-flower" again is an example of dotted ornament. The "Hammersmith" has a large conventional form repeated in smaller compass than the "Norwich," which, however, in many ways it resembles. The "Pink and Rose," in one print, is an example of flat and decorative treatment for wall-surfaces; while the "Double Bough" introduces some familiar Morris forms and methods once more. The "Triple Net" is a light pattern on a coloured ground; while the "Flora," on the other hand, in colours on a white ground, is somewhat thin in effect. The "Bachelor's Button" design is yet another instance in which boldly-treated foliage and other well-known Morris forms appear; and the "Lechlade" is a large pattern in very light and delicate colouring, great concentric leaf-sprays and purely conventional flower forms being employed with admirable effect. The "Spring Thicket" is a large, set pattern with lilies, executed in soft and harmonious colouring. The "Compton," another very fine pattern in many colours upon a dark ground, has been reproduced also in the form of a cretonne. The "Net" ceiling-paper, in several colours, completes the list of Mr. Morris's designs for paper-hangings. Of the remaining patterns produced by the firm,

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amounting in all to no more than twenty, four were adaptations from various sources, while the rest were original designs by Miss Faulkner, Miss May Morris, and last, but not least, by Mr. H. Dearle, who has for some time past been resident manager of the works at Merton Abbey. It should be remarked that many of Messrs. Morris and Co.'s wall-papers have at different times been brought out by them in additional colourings, or with variations in their schemes of colouring subsequently to their original appearance; and also that by far the largest majority of the papers are printed from hand-blocks alone, but an insignificant proportion being machine-printed, *e.g.*, the "Loop Trail," "Merton," "Carnation," and the "Oak Tree." The latter, designed by Mr. Dearle, is the most recent of all Morris and Co.'s patterns in paper-hangings.

It was but two or three years after the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. came into being that Mr. Morris formed the project of adding weaving to their other undertakings. What he has to say on the subject of this craft will be found in the address on "The Lesser Arts of Life," included in the volume of Lectures on Art by various authors, published in 1882; in the lecture entitled "Textile Fabrics" (in which the subject is treated mainly from the historical point of view), delivered in the Lecture Room of the International Health Exhibition in London on July 11th, 1884, and afterwards issued by authority as an official handbook; and lastly in the Essay prefixed to the Catalogue of the first Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society in the autumn of 1888, and republished in 1893 in the volume of collected Essays. In the first of these works, after referring briefly to the making of plain cloth which is "not susceptible of ornament," Morris says: "As the designing of woven stuffs fell into degradation in the latter days, the designers got fidgeting after trivial novelties; change for the sake of change; they must needs strive to make their woven flowers look as if they were painted with a brush, or even sometimes as if they were drawn by the engraver's burin. This gave them plenty of trouble and exercised their ingenuity in the tormenting of



THE "BRUGES" WALL-PAPER.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

their web with spots and stripes and ribs and the rest of it, but quite destroyed the seriousness of the work and even its *raison d'être*. As of pottery-painting, so of figure-weaving: do nothing in it but that which only weaving can do: and to this end make your design as elaborate as you please in silhouette, but carry it out simply; you are not drawing lines freely with your shuttle, you are building up a pattern with a fine rectilinear mosaic. If this is kept well in mind by the designer, and he does not try to force his material into no-thoroughfares, he may have abundant pleasure in the making of woven stuffs, and he is perhaps less likely to go wrong (if he has a feeling for colour) in this art than in any other. I will say further that he should be careful to get due proportions between his warp and weft: not to starve the first, which is the body of the web so to say, for the sake of the second, which is its clothes: this is done now-a-days overmuch by ingenious designers who are trying to make their web look like non-mechanical stuffs, or who want to get a delusive show of solidity in a poor cloth, which is much to be avoided: a similar fault we are too likely to fall into is of a piece with what is done in all the lesser arts to-day; and which doubtless is much fostered by the ease given to our managers of works by the over-development of machinery: I am thinking of the weaving up of rubbish into apparently delicate and dainty wares. No man, with the true instinct of a workman, should have anything to do with this: it may not mean commercial dishonesty, though I suspect it sometimes does, but it must mean artistic dishonesty: poor materials in this craft, as in all others, should only be used in coarse work, where they are used without pretence for what they are: this we must agree to at once, or sink all art in commerce (so called) in these crafts." In the Arts and Crafts Essay Morris writes: "Mechanical weaving has to repeat the pattern on the cloth within comparatively narrow limits; the number of colours also is limited in most cases to four or five. In most cloths so woven, therefore, the best plan seems to be to choose a pleasant ground colour and to superimpose a

pattern mainly composed of either a lighter shade of that colour, or a colour in no very strong contrast to the ground; and then, if you are using several colours, to light up this general arrangement either with a more forcible outline, or by spots of stronger colour carefully disposed. Often the lighter shade on the darker suffices, and hardly calls for anything else: some very beautiful cloths are merely damasks, in which the warp and weft are of the same colour, but a different tone is obtained by the figure and the ground being woven with a longer or shorter twill: the *tabby* being tied by the warp very often, the *satin* much more rarely. In any case, the patterned webs produced by mechanical weaving, if the ornament is to be effective and worth the doing, require the same Gothic crispness and clearness of detail which has been spoken of before: the geometrical structure of the pattern, which is a necessity in all recurring patterns, should be boldly insisted upon, so as to draw the eye from accidental figures, which the recurrence of the pattern is apt to produce. The meaningless stripes and spots and other tormentings of the simple twill of the web, which are so common in the woven ornament of the eighteenth century and our own times, should be carefully avoided: all these things are the last resource of a jaded invention and a contempt of the simple and fresh beauty that comes of the sympathetic *suggestion* of natural forms: if the pattern be vigorously and firmly drawn with a true feeling for the beauty of line and *silhouette*, the play of light and shade on the material of the simple twill will give all the necessary variety."

Morris's attention is said to have been drawn to the industry of weaving in the first place by the mere accident of seeing a man in the street selling toy models of weaving machines, when it occurred to him to buy one and to practise upon it for himself. After some preliminary experiments more or less successful, he then endeavoured to obtain a full-sized hand-loom. What he wanted was an old one of the old style, with hand-shuttle, &c., such as formerly had been in traditional use at Spitalfields, but



SILK AND WOOL TAPESTRY, "THE ANIMONI."

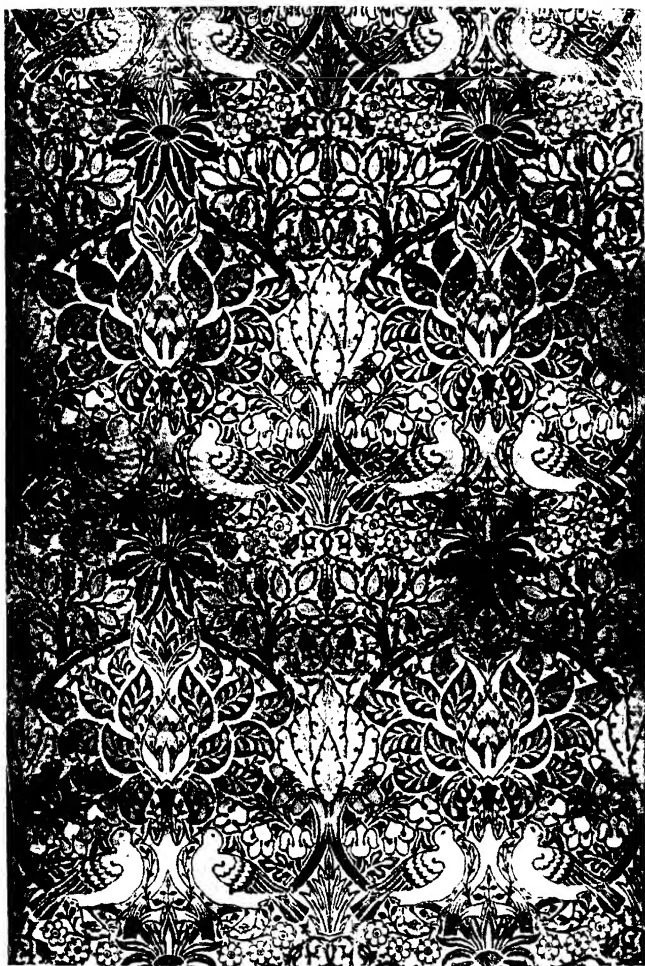
DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

had become by that time practically obsolete, save, it might be, among the very oldest weavers of the place. The matter was one in which, in default of an expert possessed of the necessary qualifications among his own colleagues or employes, Morris was obliged to turn to help from outside. It so happened that he was most unfortunate in respect of the several agents whom he trusted, one after another, and employed to procure and set up a loom for him. A series of disappointments caused so much delay that it was not until towards the close of the seventies that, a Jacquard loom having been erected in Ormond Yard, Morris was enabled to organize weaving systematically as a branch of the firm's work. From that time the industry grew, and was carried on regularly without a break. At the present time the looms are situated at Merton Abbey, and have been ever since the works there came into the possession of Messrs. Morris and Co. Morris drew a number of designs for silk damasks and brocades and woven wool-tapestries, as well as a limited number for fabrics of silk and linen and of silk and wool. The latter combination, as in the case of the "Dove and Rose" material—quite apart from the beauty of the design—has a beauty of texture which is peculiarly delightful; the weightier substance of the wool drawing the slighter-bodied surface of the silk into delicate ripples upon which the light plays with charming effect. The "Bird and Vine" is a beautiful and characteristic design in woollen tapestry, while the "Peacock and Dragon," in the same material, is a large pattern for which the artist himself had a special liking. One more example may be selected, among productions of a later date, viz., the diagonal woollen tapestry named the "Trail." The unit of this pattern is as simple as can be—a conventional leaf and a single spray of flowers; yet the richest effect is obtained by the simple but ingenious device of varying the colour of the woof threads, so that the flowers appear alternating horizontally in red, white, and pink. The general colour of the web is a warm green in several tones.

At one time Morris essayed to revive the art of weaving

velvet with gold tissue, after the method of the superb and famous webs of Florence and Venice in the fifteenth century. It was an interesting experiment, and such that will in all probability prove to have been unique in England during the present century. A loom was constructed especially for the purpose, and an exquisite design by Morris was reproduced in blue, white, and orange velvet pile, with gold thread interwoven in parts, Morris assisting personally in the process of manufacture. But it was found far too costly to be practical. Only a small quantity of this most sumptuous material was ever woven, and the attempt was not repeated.

It was about the middle of the seventies when Morris, who by that time had ceased to reside at Queen Square, happened to be in want of some special shades of silk for embroidery. But being unable to get what he needed by other means, he determined to start dyeing on his own account. Accordingly, the scullery at No. 26, Queen Square, being fitted with coppers, was chosen, rough and primitive as was the accommodation, for the dyeing; while the kitchen was turned into a drying ground, under the charge of the caretaker. From these small beginnings sprang what developed subsequently into one of the most indispensable of all the operations of the firm, to wit, that of dyeing, "since upon it," to use Mr. Morris's own words, "is founded all the ornamental character of textile fabrics." It was in fact the necessity of obtaining a sufficient supply of water for this purpose that induced Mr. Morris, when in treaty for some more commodious place of manufacture than the Queen Square house afforded, to decide upon the firm's present workshops on the Wandle. Among the several alternatives possible, yet such as would have involved the having to journey further afield, Merton Abbey, being at a distance not exceeding nine miles from London, presented the most convenient spot. Thither the process of dyeing was transferred, and there it has been carried on since the summer of 1881. The place had been used formerly for dyeing, and tradition says that, in the time of a previous occupier, Lord Nelson



SILK AND WOOL TAPESTRY, "THE DOVE AND ROSE" — DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

visited the works and was shown the various processes of the craft.

Morris began by dyeing skeins of embroidery silk, and then proceeded to dye wool for tapestry and carpets, in the manufacture of which the firm use none other than their own dyed wool. Morris himself went to Leek in order to improve his acquaintance with the technicalities of the process under the guidance of Mr. Thomas Wardle, the well-known expert and eminent authority on the dyer's craft. And so, when Morris referred to the subject in his lecture at the Health Exhibition in 1884, he was entitled to remind his audience that he was "speaking as a dyer, and not a scientific person"; he spoke, that is, as one who had had practical experience of the matters whereof he treated; in contradistinction to a theorist whose knowledge must be confined within the limits of mere book-lore; or on the other hand to an experimenting chemist. Indeed, as an artist, Morris felt very strongly that the so-called improvements effected by chemical science had proved in the highest degree injurious to the craft of dyeing. In his writings on the subject he enumerates the successive additions that have been made to the repertory of dye-stuffs in historical times, with a view to showing how that the practice of primitive ages was materially identical with that of later ages, and had in fact remained unspoilt during all the intervening centuries down to quite recent days. "No change at all," says Morris, "befell the art either in the East or the North till after the discovery of America; this gave the dyers one new material in itself good and one that was doubtful or bad. The good one was the new insect dye, cochineal, which at first was used only for dyeing crimson. . . . The bad new material was log-wood, so fugitive a dye as to be quite worthless as a colour by itself (as it was at first used) and to my mind of very little use otherwise. No other *new* dye-stuff of importance was found in America, although the discoverers came across such abundance of red-dyeing wood growing there that a huge country of South America has thence taken its name of Brazil." "About the year 1656, . . . a

Dutch chemist discovered the secret of getting a scarlet from cochineal" on a tin basis, "and so produced a cheaper, brighter, and uglier scarlet, much to the satisfaction of the civilized world." "In the last years of the eighteenth century a worthless blue was invented. . . . About the same time a rather valuable yellow dye (quercitron bark) was introduced from America." Nothing else of moment occurred "up to the time of the discovery of the process of Prussian blue dyeing in about 1810, . . . which has cheapened and worsened black-dyeing in so far as it has taken the place of the indigo vat as a basis." "Now these novelties, the sum of which amounts to very little, are all that make any difference between the practice of dyeing under Rameses the Great and under Queen Victoria, till about twenty years ago." (These words were published in 1882. A few sentences from another work may best describe what befell at the time indicated. The date, to be precise, was 1858.) "Then came," says Morris, "one of the most wonderful and most useless of the inventions of modern chemistry, that of the dyes made from coal-tar, producing a series of hideous colours, crude, livid—and cheap,—which every person of taste loathes, but which nevertheless we can by no means get rid of until we are able to struggle successfully against the doom of cheap and nasty which has overtaken us." These newly-discovered methods, "from a so-called commercial point of view, have been of the greatest importance; for they have, as the phrase goes, revolutionized the art of dyeing. The dye-stuffs discovered by the indefatigable genius of scientific chemists, which everyone has heard of under the name of aniline colours, . . . are brighter and stronger in colour than the old dyes . . . and, which is of course of the last importance to the dyer, infinitely easier to use. No wonder, therefore, that they have almost altogether supplanted the older dyes, except in a few cases: surely the invention seems a splendid one! Well, it is only marred by one fact, that being an invention for the benefit of an art whose very existence depends upon its producing beauty, it is on the road, and far advanced on it, towards

destroying all beauty in the art. The fact is, that every one of these colours is hideous in itself, whereas all the old dyes are in themselves beautiful colours—only extreme perversity could make an ugly colour out of them. Under these circumstances it must, I suppose, be considered a negative virtue in the new dyes, that they are as fugitive as the older ones are stable; but even on that head I will ask you to note one thing that condemns them finally, that whereas the old dyes when fading, as all colours will do more or less, simply gradually changed into paler tints of the same colour, and were not unpleasant to look on, the fading of the new dyes is a change into all kinds of abominable and livid hues. I mention this because otherwise it might be thought that a man with an artistic eye for colour might so blend the hideous but bright aniline colours as to produce at least something tolerable; indeed, this is not unfrequently attempted to-day, but with small success, partly from the reason above mentioned, partly because the hues so produced by 'messing about,' as I should call it, have none of the *quality* or character which the simpler drug gives naturally: all artists will understand what I mean by this." Elsewhere, comparing the two classes of dyes, Morris refers to pre-aniline colours as follows: "As to the artistic value of these dye-stuffs, most of which, together with the necessary mordant alumina, the world discovered in early times (I mean early *historical* times), I must tell you that they all make in their simplest forms beautiful colours; they need no muddling into artistic usefulness, when you need your colours bright (as I hope you usually do), and they can be modified and toned without dirtying, as the foul blotches of the capitalist dyer cannot be. Like all dyes, they are not eternal; the sun in lighting them and beautifying them consumes them; yet gradually and for the most part kindly. . . . These colours in fading still remain beautiful, and never, even after long wear, pass into nothingness, through that tinge of livid ugliness which distinguishes the commercial dyes as nuisances, even more than their short and by no means merry life." In fine, "it is most true that the

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chemists of our day have made discoveries almost past belief for their wonder ; they have given us a set of colours which has made a new thing of the dyer's craft ; commercial enterprise has eagerly seized on the gift, and yet, unless all art is to disappear from our woven stuffs, we must turn round and utterly and simply reject it." The above passage is extracted from the lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life." Morris refers, in very similar terms, in his essay "Of Dyeing as an Art," to aniline dyes, which are "deduced," as he says, "by a long process from the plants of the coal-measures. Of these dyes it must be enough to say that their discovery, while conferring the greatest honour on the abstract science of chemistry, and while doing great service to capitalists in their hunt for profits, has terribly injured the art of dyeing, and for the general public has nearly destroyed it as an art. Henceforward there is an absolute divorce between the *commercial process* and the *art* of dyeing. Anyone wanting to produce dyed textiles with any artistic quality in them, must entirely forego the modern and commercial methods in favour of those which are at least as old as Pliny, who speaks of them as being old in his time." After this it is scarcely necessary to add that no aniline dyes are admitted, on any pretext, into the vats of Messrs. Morris and Co.

"The art of dyeing, I am bound to say," writes Morris, who was well qualified to express an opinion on the subject, "is a difficult one, needing for its practice a good craftsman, with plenty of experience. Matching a colour by means of it is an agreeable but somewhat anxious game to play." In several places he has left on record his own personal experiences in the use of various dyes. Thus, in the lecture on "Textile Fabrics," already quoted, he says of indigo that "as long as it keeps its colour and nature, it "is insoluble and therefore unfit for dyeing ; it has therefore to be turned into white indigo by means of deoxidation, which is effected . . . chiefly by fermentation ; the white indigo is then soluble by alkalies ; this deoxidation is called by the dyers 'setting the vat' ; and this setting by means of fermentation, the oldest and best way, is a very

ticklish job, and the capacity of doing so indicates the past master in dyeing," though perhaps it "seems an easy process" enough. The ancient blue dye-stuff has at any rate one advantage, which, as Morris points out, is of no little account: "I may note also that no textiles dyed blue or green, otherwise than by indigo, keep an agreeable colour by candle-light: many quite bright greens turning into sheer drab." Elsewhere Morris writes: "I myself have dyed wool red," (which was to his mind "above all a dyer's colour,") "by the selfsame process that the Mosaical dyers used. . . . If I want for my own use some of the red dye above alluded to, I must send to Argolis or Acharnania for it." And although this "red insect dye, . . . called by the classical peoples coccus, and by the Arabs Al kermes," shares "somewhat in the ill qualities of madder for silk,"—it is apt, that is, to take off the gloss, and was for that reason never used so largely for silk dyeing as were some other dyes,—Morris says, again, that he has "dyed silk in kermes and got very beautiful and powerful results by means of it. . . . Yellow dyes," he continues a little further on, "are the commonest to be met with in nature, and our fields and hedgerows bear plenty of greening-weeds, as our forefathers called them, since they used them chiefly for greening blue woollen cloth. . . . Of these I have tried poplar and osier twigs, which both gave a strong yellow, but the former not a very permanent one." These quotations must suffice. The whole subject of dyeing will be found dealt with both fully and clearly in Morris's Arts and Crafts Essay.

From self-colour dyeing was but one step to pattern printing on textile fabrics of velveteen, of cotton or linen. "The art of dyeing," says Morris, "leads me naturally to the humble but useful art of printing on cloth. . . . As to the craft among ourselves, it has, as a matter of course, suffered grievously from the degradation of dyeing, and this not only from the worsening of the tints both in beauty and durability, but from a more intricate cause. I have said that the older dyes were much more difficult to use than the modern ones. The processes for getting a many-

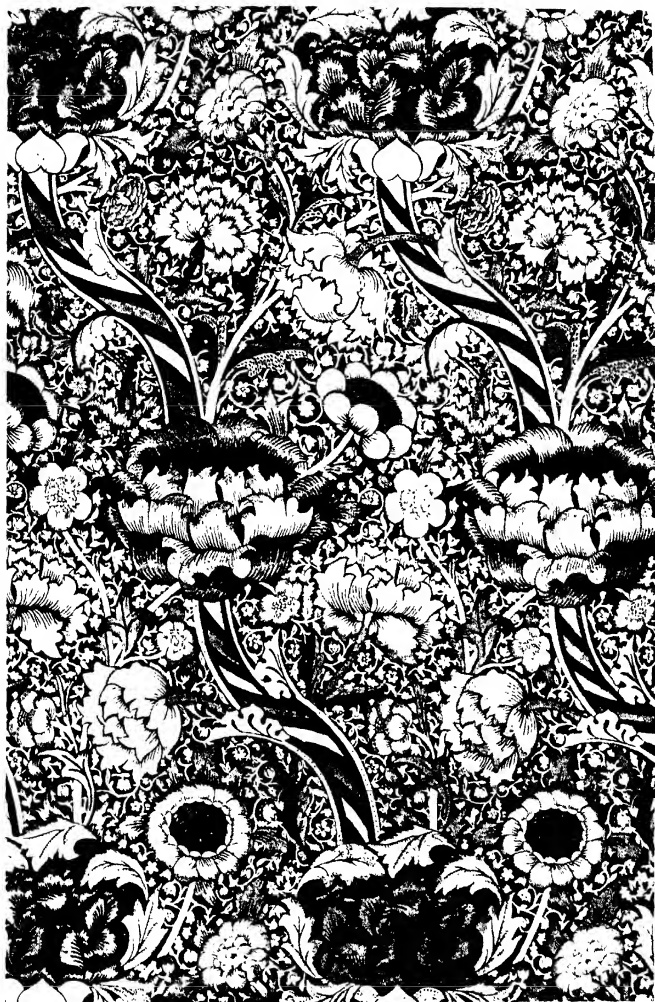
Morris says: "The remarks made on the designs for mechanically woven cloths apply pretty much to these printed stuffs: only, in the first place, more play of delicate and pretty colour is possible, and more variety of colour also; and in the second, much more use can be made of hatching and dotting, which are obviously suitable to the method of block-printing. In the many-coloured printed cloths, frank red and blue are again the mainstays of the colour arrangement; these colours, softened by the paler shades of red, outlined with black and made more tender by the addition of yellow in small quantities, mostly forming part of brightish greens, make up the colouring of the old Persian prints, which carry the art as far as it can be carried."

The above conditions which he lays down as requisites for the craft, Morris has indeed fulfilled abundantly in the number of beautiful chintzes, cretonnes, and printed velveteens of which he has been the author. He made designs for these materials long before he was personally in a position to effect the production of them. The firm's earliest blocks for the purpose of pattern-printing on textiles were cut by Mr. Clarkson, then of Coventry Street, who also cut a roller, to their order, for stamped velvet, when the firm had been in existence about ten years. By him also, at the beginning, was undertaken the printing of chintzes, &c., for the firm. Later on this department of their work was carried out on behalf of Messrs. Morris and Co. by Mr. Wardle of Leek. But eventually when Morris acquired possession of the works at Merton he was able to carry on all these processes on his own premises. Of Morris cretonnes and chintzes the "Bird and Anemone," in a single print, and one in many colours, the "Strawberry Thief," a favourite pattern of the artist's own, may well compare as illustrating the variant treatment of ornament in which bird forms are introduced. The first is a simple repeat, while the second is constructed on the basis of a doubled pattern. The "Honeysuckle" is an exquisite combination of somewhat naturalistic with thoroughly conventional forms; a task that is by no means easy of

achievement. The "Wandle" design is composed entirely of conventional forms. With its large peony-like rosettes breaking, at regular intervals, the course of the pronounced diagonal band which forms the chief feature; its intervening spaces filled with a profusion of flowers relieved against a background of deep blue, which again is varied by a sort of delicate underprinting in white, this is one of the richest designs imaginable. It is a marvel that a fabric, so poor by comparison, should admit of a decorative effect so splendid as this.

It is about ten or twelve years since pattern-printing on white velveteen was first attempted by Morris and Co., a branch in which their productions have hitherto proved to be unrivalled—the designs, of course, being Morris's and such, perhaps, as no hand but his could produce. Of these the "Acanthus," though early in point of date, has hardly been surpassed for simple dignity by later designs; while the "Florence" and the "Cherwell" are both admirable and well adapted, as patterns, for the particular material. There is one, however, than which it is impossible to conceive anything more splendid of its kind. It is known as the "Severn," and is printed on white velveteen; yellowish brown dots, closely powdered upon the surface, forming a background against which the main features of the design, large conventional flowers and acanthus foliage, outlined in brown, stand out white and clear. Together with these, light green leaves and rose-red tulips make up the most delicate harmony of colours. The same design is printed on a cotton cloth, but the difference of texture is such that the two fabrics cannot well be compared with one another.

To the art of embroidery, as has been pointed out in a previous chapter, Mr. Morris gave his attention right early. "Of the design for" this branch of work he writes, "it must be said that one of its aims should be the exhibition of beautiful material. Furthermore it is not worth doing unless it is either very copious and rich, or very delicate—or both. For such an art nothing patchy or scrappy, or half-starved, should be done: there is no excuse for doing anything which is not strikingly beautiful. . . . It may be



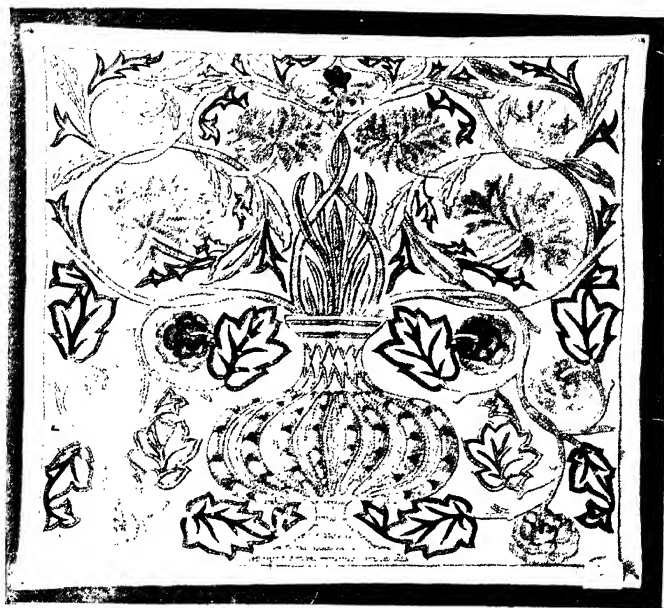
THE "WANDLE" CHINTZ.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.



THE "WY" CHINTZ.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS



FLK EMBROIDERY,
THE FLOWER POT.

DESIGNED BY
WILLIAM MORRIS.

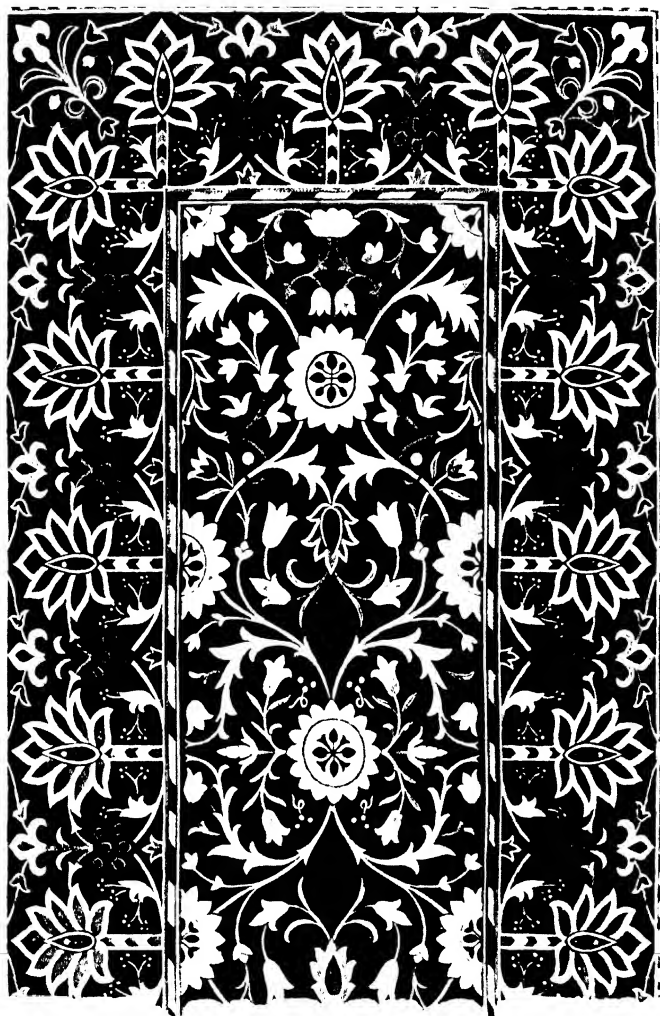
WILLIAM MORRIS

well here to warn those occupied in embroidery against the feeble imitations of Japanese art which are so disastrously common amongst us. The Japanese are admirable naturalists, wonderfully skilful draughtsmen, deft beyond all others in mere execution of whatever they take in hand; and also great masters of style within certain narrow limitations. But with all this a Japanese design is absolutely worthless unless it is executed with Japanese skill. In truth, with all their brilliant qualities as handicraftsmen, which have so dazzled us, the Japanese have no architectural, and therefore no decorative, instinct. Their works of art are isolated and blankly individualistic, and in consequence, unless where they rise, as they sometimes do, to the dignity of a suggestion for a picture (always devoid of human interest), they remain mere wonderful toys, things quite outside the pale of the evolution of art, which, I repeat, cannot be carried on without the architectural sense that connects it with the history of mankind." It may be permitted to interpolate here some further remarks of Morris's, bearing as they do upon the same subject. "It is true," so he says in the lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," "that these non-architectural races (let the Chinese stand as a type of them) have no general mastery over the arts, and seem to play with them rather than to try to put their souls into them. Clumsy-handed as the European or Aryan workman is (of a good period, I mean) as compared with his Turanian fellow, there is a seriousness and depth of feeling which, when brought to bear upon the matter of our daily life, is in fact the soul of Architecture, whatever the body may be; so that I shall still say that among ourselves, the men of modern Europe, the existence of the other arts is bound up with that of Architecture. And again, speaking of certain properties of Chinese work, Morris says, "They were indeed valuable qualities in the hands of a Chinaman, deft as he was of execution, fertile of design, fanciful though not imaginative; in short, a born maker of pretty toys; but such daintinesses were of little avail to a good workman of our race,—. . . he had other work to do . . . than the making of toys." The last

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features to be looked for, then, in Morris ornament for embroidery, or indeed any other craft, are those which characterize either Chinese or Japanese designs. Thus for instance the employment of gold thread is almost unknown in Morris's embroideries. Whereas the capabilities of needlework done while held in the hand, as distinct from that executed while stretched in a frame, have been developed to a high degree of perfection. In particular very beautiful effects have been obtained by means of darning stitch in twist silks upon special hand-woven cotton and linen cloths, the entire surface of the material being covered with solid embroidery. As to the colours used it is needless to say that they display to utmost advantage the rich and harmonious combinations which distinguish the style of Morris. It should be noted beside that the accidental irregularities of the dyeing process, which rarely produces absolute uniformity of tint throughout, imparts to the Morris embroidery-silks additional charm and variety of effect.

William Morris allowed the use of some of his designs to the Royal School of Art Needlework in Exhibition Road, Kensington, with whose aims and objects, from the time of its foundation in 1872, he was naturally in sympathy. A bed-hanging from his design was worked in the school for the Honourable Mrs. Percy Wyndham. In the "Handbook of Embroidery," by L. Higgin, edited by Lady Marian Alford, and published by authority of the School of Art Needlework in 1880, were reproduced three Morris designs, viz., two diapers for embroidered wall-hangings (one of them, with honeysuckle and other flowers, being printed in colours), and thirdly a border, an adaptation of the same motif as the "Marigold" pattern in wall-paper. These instances however are exceptions. The majority of Morris's embroidery designs remain the property of the firm and are executed through the department of which his daughter, Miss May Morris (Mrs. Sparling), has for some years past been in charge. This lady is not only an excellent worker and teacher of embroidery, but also herself of unusual talents as a designer. The amount c



SKETCH DESIGN FOR "THE LITTLE FLOWERS" CARPET.

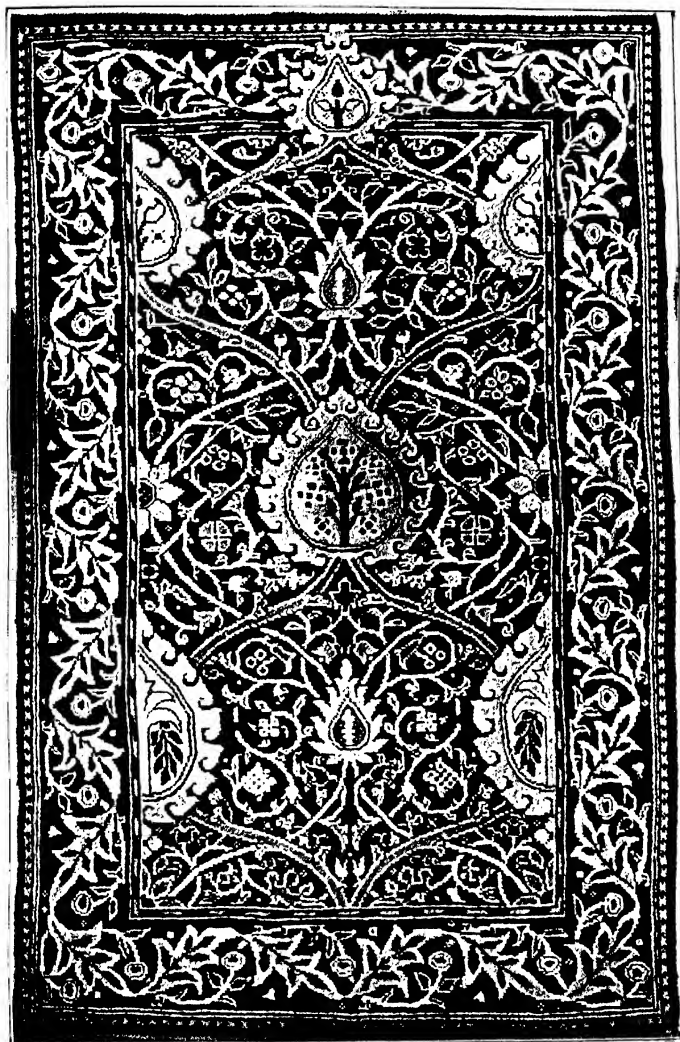
BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

embroidery undertaken by the firm for ecclesiastical purposes is insignificant: the greater portion consisting of domestic work in the shape of curtains, table-cloths, squares for cushions, and some smaller articles. Although a catalogue of names is powerless to convey any idea of the description or beauty of Morris needlework, the "Tulip and Rose," "Olive and Rose," "Rose Wreath," "Vine and Pink" and "Flower-pot" pattern by Mr. Morris for embroidered cushion-covers; as also his splendid curtain executed in coloured silks upon a background of yellowish green linen—all of them shown at one or other of the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions in London—may be mentioned as especially fine and characteristic examples of his designs for embroidery.

The record-roll of the domestic arts taken up by William Morris's firm would not have been complete without that of carpet-making. The earliest of Morris's designs for this craft was for Kidderminster carpet. It was a very simple one, called the "Grass" pattern, and was followed by the "Lily," a small pattern again, comprised of lilies and fritillaries, arranged upon the scale principle, with a narrow border of chevrons when it was intended to serve as a stair-carpet. There being no means of executing these carpets upon the premises, they had to be woven elsewhere for Messrs. Morris and Co. It happened that the designs were not registered, and one of them, the "Lily," was appropriated by an unscrupulous manufacturer, who produced it on his own account, after having made some minute alteration in it by leaving out part of the ply. The manufacturer, when confronted with Mr. Morris, owned that he could not rebut the charge; and there the matter ended, to obtain redress being out of the question. Wilton and Axminster and, latterly, Brussels carpets have in turn been designed by Morris and executed on behalf of the firm. It goes without saying that these are all of the best quality—indeed Morris would not have been satisfied with anything less—as regards material; and as for design they are not a whit below Morris's high standard in other wares. They are both pleasant to look at and in

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every way suited to their purpose. But it was not any such kinds of carpets as these that Morris had in mind when writing or speaking of the art of carpet-weaving. By the latter he meant, to use his own words, "the real thing, such as the East has furnished us with from time immemorial, and not the makeshift imitation woven by means of the Jacquard loom, or otherwise mechanically." This is what, elsewhere, he says on the same subject: "Carpet-weaving is somewhat of the nature of tapestry: it also is wholly unmechanical. . . Carpets form a mosaic of small squares of worsted, or hair, or silk threads, tied into a coarse canvas, which is made as the work progresses. Owing to the comparative coarseness of the work, the designs should always be very elementary in form, and *suggestive* merely of forms of leafage, flowers, beasts, and birds, &c. The soft gradations of tint to which tapestry lends itself are unfit for carpet-weaving; beauty and variety of colour must be attained by harmonious juxtaposition of tints, bounded by judiciously chosen outlines; and the pattern should lie absolutely flat upon the ground. On the whole, in designing carpets the method of *contrast* is the best one to employ, and blue and red, quite frankly used, with white or very light outlines on a dark ground, and black or some very dark colour on a light ground, are the main colours on which the designer should depend. In making the above remarks I have been thinking only of the genuine or hand-made carpets. The mechanically-made carpets of to-day must be looked upon as makeshifts for cheapness' sake. . . . The velvet carpets need the same kind of design as to colour and quality as the real carpets; only, as the colours are necessarily limited in number, and the pattern must repeat at certain distances, the design should be simpler and smaller than in a real carpet. A Kidderminster carpet calls for a small design in which the different planes, or plies, as they are called, are well interlocked." In another place, speaking of old Persian carpets, Morris describes one class of them as having been "designed on scientific principles which any good designer can apply to works of our own day without burdening his



THE "BLACK TREE" CARPET.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS.



THE "LITTLE TREE" CARPET.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MOR.

conscience with the charge of plagiarism." And as for the other class of ancient carpets, with Persian floral designs, he says, "These, beautiful as they are in colour, are as far as possible from lacking form in design; they are fertile of imagination and rich in drawing; and though imitation of them would carry with it its usual disastrous consequences, they show us the way to set about designing such like things, and that a carpet can be made which by no means depends for its success on the mere instinct of colour." Again, "To us pattern designers," says Morris, "Persia has become a holy land, for there in the process of time our art was perfected, and thence above all places it spread to cover for a while the world, east and west." He would commend "the designers of time past . . . and the usefulness of the lives of these men . . . whose names are long forgotten, but whose works we still wonder at. In their own way they meant to tell us how the flowers grew in the gardens of Damascus, or how the hunt was up on the plains of Kirman, or how the tulips shone among the grass in the Mid-Persian valley, and how their souls delighted in it all, and what joy they had in life; nor did they fail to make their meaning clear to some of us." So much for the past. But the future of Eastern art had only gloomy prospects for William Morris. He could not sufficiently deplore the action of the Government in "manufacturing cheap Indian carpets in the Indian gaols. . . . In this case the Government . . . has determined that it will make its wares cheap, whether it make them nasty or not. Cheap and nasty they are, I assure you; but, though they are the worst of their kind, they would not be made thus, if everything did not tend the same way. And it is the same everywhere and with all Indian manufactures. . . . In short, their art is dead, and the commerce of modern civilization has slain it. What is going on in India is also going on, more or less, all over the East; but I have spoken of India chiefly because I cannot help thinking that we ourselves are responsible for what is happening there." "Withal," wrote Morris in another place, "one thing seems certain, that if we don't set to work making

our own carpets it will not be long before we shall find the East fail us: for that last gift, the gift of the sense of harmonious colour, is speedily dying out in the East before the conquests of European rifles and money-bags."

Stirred, then, by some such apprehensions as are expressed by him in the foregoing passages, and at the same time conscious, no doubt, of his own personal fitness, before all others, for the task, William Morris formed the fixed determination to rescue, by his own effort, the perishing art of carpet-weaving. He began accordingly to make a systematic study of an antique Persian carpet, examining and analysing its every detail, until at length he had mastered the method of construction to the extent of being able to start weaving in the same manner with his own hands. Thus, from his own designs and with his own dyed wool, a certain quantity of pile-carpet squares were produced, under the immediate direction of his helping hand, in a loom set up in the back attic at Queen Square. But ere long the industry outgrew these narrow bounds, and was transferred to the coach-house adjoining Morris's house at Hammersmith, where looms were set up and a certain number of women were employed in the weaving. Thence it was that these splendid pile fabrics of Morris and Co.'s came by the name of "Hammersmith" carpets, by which they are now always known. In some instances the device of a hammer, in allusion to the place of manufacture, was woven into the borders of the carpets. In this connection it may be mentioned by the way that no other formal trademark was adopted by the firm; unless indeed one excepts the device of two doves, flying together somewhat in the attitude of the swallows on willow pattern china,—a badge which was designed by Madox Brown and was in use by the original company in the early period of their career. From Hammersmith the carpet-weaving was moved to Merton Abbey, where it is now carried on, and constitutes not the least flourishing industry of the firm.

In the matter of carpets, no less than in that of every other craft taken in hand by Morris, his own words provide



THE "RED CAR" CARPET.

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS

WILLIAM MORRIS

the best commentary that could be found ; since his own productions do not fail to satisfy the most stringent canons which he formulated for the right conduct of the art. And his carpet-making furnishes a very excellent case in point. Here was a craft with definite limitations such as might on no account be ignored nor over-stepped ; a craft moreover which had already on its native soil been carried to what anyone might have assumed to be the goal of its highest attainable perfection. Its former glories had long since passed away, and yet Morris undertook to resuscitate it, nor was daunted by the magnitude of the task. To embark on the enterprise of manufacturing carpets for modern folk living in modern dwellings did not seem to afford much scope for the employment of the artistic faculty ; yet by applying in present day carpet-making those principles that diligent research had discovered to him were they which governed the practice of the art at its zenith, Morris proved it to be capable of yet further development, and more beautiful, than it had undergone for centuries. Those who visited the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1893 will recall the magnificent pile carpet exhibited by Messrs. Morris and Co., which was the principal object in the West Gallery there. It was designed by Morris and manufactured specially for Mr. Sanderson at Buller's Wood—whence its name. This carpet does not come under the head of those more common and rudimentary patterns referred to in the lecture of Morris above quoted. On the contrary, it belongs to the more elaborate and complex order. It is not copied, of course, from oriental work, but evolved rather out of the English artist's brilliant powers of invention. At the same time it is such that no Persian handicraftsman in the palmiest days of the carpet-weaving art need have been ashamed of, if but he had been entitled to claim it as his own.

Allied to carpet-craft is "the noblest of the weaving arts," to wit, that of tapestry, known under the specific name of Arras. The conditions of carpet and tapestry weaving are alike, and such that entail a very similar mode of execution, similar material and similar apparatus. The

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latter is simplicity itself. In fact, neither industry is one which demands "the help of anything that can fairly be called a machine: little more is needed than a frame which will support heavy beams on which we may strain our warp: our work is purely hand-work—we may do what we will according to the fineness of our warp." Tapestry making "requires but a very small amount of technical, though often much artistic, skill." The purpose of the craft is the production of "what may fairly be called woven pictures; webs whose elaboration and want of repetition of pattern would scarcely allow of any reasonable effect being produced by mere mechanical weaving." In the Arts and Crafts Essay on "Textiles" is Morris's description of the art as it should be: "It may be looked upon," he says, "as a mosaic of pieces of colour made up of dyed threads, and is capable of producing wall ornament of any degree of elaboration within the proper limits of duly considered decorative work. As in all wall-decoration, the first thing to be considered in the designing of Tapestry is the force, purity and elegance of the *silhouette* of the objects represented, and nothing vague or indeterminate is admissible. But special excellences can be expected from it. Depth of tone, richness of colour, and exquisite gradations of tints are easily to be obtained in tapestry; and it also demands that crispness and abundance of beautiful detail which was the especial characteristic of fully developed Mediæval Art."

The method of weaving which William Morris proposed to revive was the traditional one, the same which survives to this day at the Gobelins factory, viz., that of the vertical loom, or *haute lisse* as it is called to distinguish it from the *basse lisse*, or horizontal loom, where the weaver looks down upon the face of the web as he works; whereas in the case of the high warp loom the weaver is seated at the back and can only see the front of the web by looking through the warp threads at its reflection in a mirror. This system of weaving is demonstrated in the model of a *haute lisse* tapestry loom which Mr. Morris gave to the South Kensington Museum in 1893 (Catalogue number

156). At the time when it occurred to him to start hand-weaving according to the ancient plan, it was a thing extinct in this country. In fact the last work of the kind in England was the industry which had been carried on at Mortlake and which was stopped by the Protector Cromwell. Thus there was no working model at hand to which Morris could refer for practical illustration of the method of weaving. It is true that the other system had been inaugurated by the opening of the Royal Tapestry Works at Windsor, as Morris showed in his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," wherein he remarked: "I am sorry to have to say that an attempt to set the art going, which has been made, doubtless with the best intentions, under royal patronage at Windsor, within the last few years, has most unluckily gone on the lines of the work at the Gobelins, and if it does not change its system utterly, is doomed to artistic failure, whatever its commercial success may be." The prediction was fulfilled only too surely. The Windsor tapestry factory did not manage to attract the custom of the public by means of the landscapes and other realistic representations which it produced, and a few years ago the establishment was definitely closed, the plant sold, and the staff of workers disbanded. Nor was there much to be learnt elsewhere. For, as to the craft in France at the present day, its "poor remains" lie "in that mud of degradation" into which they were dragged by "the establishment of that hatching nest of stupidity, the Gobelins," which changed tapestry weaving, from having been "a fine art" and a noble, into a mere "upholsterer's toy." "If you are curious on the subject of its technique you may see that going on as in its earlier, or let us say real, life at the Gobelins at Paris; but it is a melancholy sight: the workmen are as handy at it as only Frenchmen can be at such work, and their skill is traditional too, I have heard; for they are the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of tapestry weavers. Well, their ingenuity is put to the greatest pains for the least results: it would be a mild word to say that what they make is worthless; it is more than that; it has a corrupting and

deadening influence upon all the Lesser Arts of France, since it is always put forward as the very standard and crown of all that those arts can do at the best: a more idiotic waste of human labour and skill it is impossible to conceive. There is another branch of the same stupidity, differing slightly in technique, at Beauvais; and the little town of Aubusson in mid-France has a decaying commercial industry of the like rubbish." Thus Morris felt constrained to refer to the art of tapestry as something that "must be spoken of in the past tense." And moreover he deemed it necessary to apologize to his audience for addressing them at any length on so ineffectual a subject as an art which had "practically perished." At the same time, "There is nothing whatever," he urged "to prevent us from reviving it if we please, since the technique of it is easy to the last degree." These words appeared in 1882. Already by that date Morris had achieved somewhat in the direction of the revival he advocated. In default of any existing instance available where the actual weaving process might be observed, Morris had had to pick up the details of the craft, as best he might, from an old French official handbook, published prior to the Revolution. He caused a handloom to be set up in his bedroom at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, and, so as not to let this new undertaking of his interfere with his ordinary occupations, he used to rise betimes and practise weaving in the early hours of the morning. By following out the instructions he gathered from his printed guide, Morris gradually overcame the difficulties of the craft and became a proficient weaver himself. With his own hand he wove a beautiful piece of tapestry, designed by himself with birds and foliage, for a private gift. In one or two respects he even improved upon the instructions given in the French book. For example, the plan therein recommended for marking on the warp threads the design to be woven was to use charcoal. But experience showed Morris that this method was inadequate, because the charcoal, in the process of working, quickly got rubbed off, before the outline of the pattern had stood long enough to be carried into execution.

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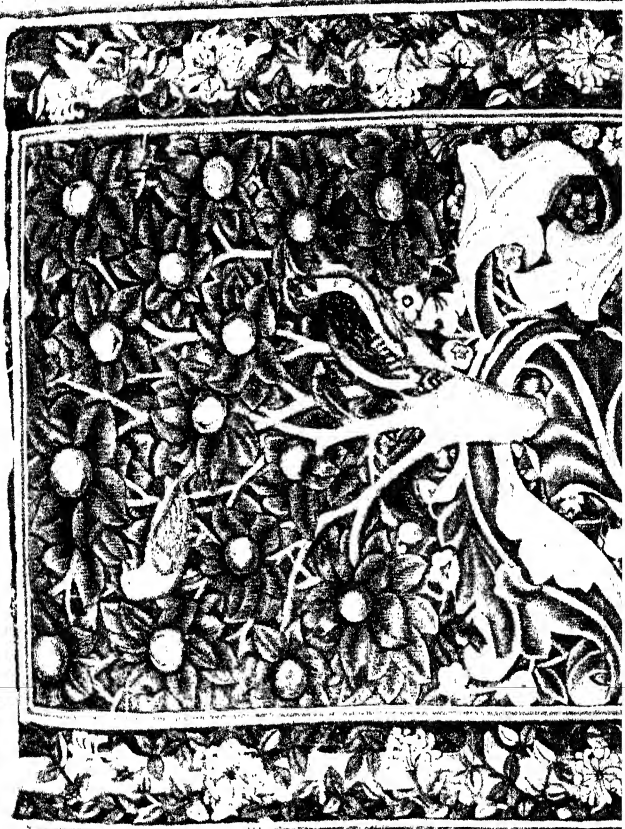
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ever twist trunk and leaf · chasing the prey ·

Accordingly, with the aid of Mr. Campfield, he devised a more permanent means of fixing the outline, by holding a brush, dipped in Indian ink, to the warp thread at the point required, and then twirling the thread round between the finger and thumb so as to mark it thoroughly and thus avoid the risk of obliteration. In his earliest experiments in weaving; conducted, on behalf of the firm, as far back as the year 1878; Mr. Morris had the assistance of Mr. H. Dearle, to whom he imparted what he himself had learned of the art. Their first efforts were confined to floral designs, with the occasional introduction of birds into the composition. The first time that figure-weaving was attempted was at Merton in 1881, the subject being the "Goose Girl," from a cartoon by Mr. Walter Crane. Thenceforward, with one exception, the figures were always designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Among the earlier tapestries of the firm of Morris and Co. were two of the type known by the technical name of "Verdura;" both shown at the Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in 1888. One of them, an upright panel, designed by W. Morris, is an admirable instance of the adaptability of his bold, sweeping leaf-scrolls to this kind of work. It is called "The Woodpecker," after the main incident depicted in it, and is ornamented above and below with ribbon scrolls bearing verses from the pen of Mr. Morris—verses included in the collection of "Poems by the Way." The other is a horizontal panel, woven for Mr. Alexander Ionides. It is named "The Forest." The foliage and flowers were designed by Mr. Morris and Mr. Dearle respectively, but the animals introduced into the composition—a lion and a fox—were from cartoons by Mr. Philip Webb. These however, being in the latter's wonted zoological style, do not seem quite in keeping with their severely conventional surroundings. Designs in which the contrary elements of realism and decoration are combined in so marked a way as this seldom produce satisfactory results. More commonly a loss of organic unity is the result. In the particular case in point one cannot help deploring the fact, and feeling that a far more harmonious effect would have

been obtained had the whole of this tapestry been designed by William Morris alone, or at any rate by none other than those who, by training, have acquired his ornamental manner. However, Morris himself thought otherwise. In the two tapestry panels entitled "Flora" and "Pomona," each with an allegorical figure designed by Burne-Jones, very similar "verdura" backgrounds occur; rabbits and birds being introduced in the "Flora" panel with excellent effect amid the flowers and wreathing acanthus foliage. Either panel has scrolls with two quatrains, written by Morris and published in "Poems by the Way" in 1891.

Messrs. Morris and Co.'s first large figure-subject tapestry, and perhaps also their best known work of this kind, was "The Star of Bethlehem" panel, designed by Burne-Jones for Exeter College Chapel at Oxford, and completed in April, 1890. It was but fitting that the two friends should have the opportunity to unite together thus in the beautifying of their old college. Unfortunately this splendid piece of tapestry, the joint product of Morris and Burne-Jones, is ill-shown in the position in which it is fixed, against the south wall of the edifice: and yet it is a veritable treasure and deserves to be made more of than it is, since—alas, that it should have to be said!—it is the only artistic object in the chapel that enshrines it. The new building is indeed such that could not possibly commend itself to Mr. Morris, who always regretted the disappearance of the plain old building that stood in its place in his undergraduate days. How much beauty of decorative detail in "The Star of Bethlehem" tapestry was due to Morris and Co. may be perceived by comparison of their woven panel with Burne-Jones's drawing as brought to its final state in 1891. The discrepancies in the two versions represent the amount that the artist in his cartoon left blank for Morris and Co. to fill in before they executed it in arras; these very parts being supplied eventually by Burne-Jones with ornaments of an entirely different design. The lilies, irises, tulips, borage, heartsease, and other flowers in the foreground of the tapestry were indicated but slightly and sketchily in the original, and all of them



KRAS TAPESTRY, "FLORA"

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MORRIS
 THE FIGURE IS BY SIR EDWARD BURN-JONES, BART.



ARRAS TAPESTRY, "POISONA."

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM MOR
THE FIGURE IS BY SIR EDWARD BURNES-JONES, B.



DETAIL OF WATER
COLOUR PAINTING.

"THE SEAK OF BETHLEHEM."
BY SIR F. BURN JONES, BART.

BY PERMISSION OF THE CORPORATION OF BIRMINGHAM



DETAIL OF ARRAS TAPESTRY,
EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

"THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM," DE-
SIGN BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES, BART.

had to be drawn afresh in definite shape by Morris and Co., as were also the patterns on the draperies, the jewellery, &c. The firm was called upon twice subsequently to produce replicas of "The Star of Bethlehem," one of them being a commission from Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.

In one single instance, and that a notable one for the very reason that he did so, Mr. Morris provided a set of four figures from drawings by his own hand, to be reproduced in arras tapestry, which was shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1893. These, by the way, were the same figures which he had designed in the first instance for the roof of Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge. Only, whereas the angels in the original decoration hold in their hands a scroll inscribed with the words of an ancient hymn, in place thereof in the latter case the figures display some verses from the pen of William Morris, beginning, "Midst bitten mead and acre shorn," &c., and published under the title-heading of "The Orchard" in "Poems by the Way." This specimen (apart from the figures, which, contrary to his wont, as has been shown, Morris designed himself) may serve as a typical example of how, among the several persons participating in the execution of any given piece of tapestry at Merton Abbey works, each one's share was apportioned. The fruit trees in the background were designed by Mr. Morris; the flowers in the foreground by Mr. Dearle; and the diapers and minor details of the ornament by those whose hands were engaged in the actual weaving.

The Morris window in Salisbury Cathedral, designed by Burne-Jones and representing groups of ministering and praising angels, has been mentioned already. The identical figures have since been adapted, in subdued blues and reds, with a dull but rich-coloured background of foliage and flowers, with borders, &c., and worked out in two panels of arras tapestry by Messrs. Morris and Co.; and that with results so fine that the disquieting question perforce suggests itself whether these cartoons are not more appropriate to the latter medium. In that event it follows—does it not?—that they are scarcely in the best

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manner of design for stained glass too. Had the lead-glazing and the consequent subdivision of surface been, as they ought, an integral part of the original conception, it must have been a literal impossibility to convert the cartoons, by the omission of their lead lines or by any other means, into proper designs for tapestry treatment, short of altering their whole form and character. It is not too much to affirm that no design submitted for stained glass without the lead lines being marked would be accepted from any student in the National Art competition, of which Mr. Morris himself was a judge. But, to remove any possible doubt on the point, take an instance of stained glass as it is seen at its perfection of maturity in the fifteenth century, say in the ante-chapel of New College, Oxford, or of All Souls'; at Thornhill Church, Yorkshire, or at Fairford: imagine a window from any one of these places re-drawn upon paper and then executed in arras in the loom. The thing is preposterous! The very character and conditions which go to make the excellence of a design for one branch of art work, almost necessarily disqualify the same design from being carried out in any different material; the measure of its fitness for the one being in inverse ratio to its fitness for the other. And if this rule be such as holds good generally, even in respect of arts which are nearly akin to one another; how much more forcibly does it apply in the case of two so diverse as glass painting and tapestry weaving! The principle, after all, is one which Morris himself has laid down and emphasized again and again in his own writings and public utterances. However, since tapestry is of the nature of woven picture-work, paintings certainly lend themselves, of all branches of art, to more legitimate adaptations than any other for this medium. Thus the figures painted at Jesus College, when, years afterwards, they were modified and introduced into a tapestry hanging, did not seem to have suffered in the process, nor to be in any way out of keeping with the composition. On the other hand, there can be little disputing that "The Star of Bethlehem," designed as it was *ab initio* for tapestry, is far more satis-

factory in that form even than when worked up from the cartoon into the large water-colour picture commissioned by the directors of the Municipal Art Gallery at Birmingham. Another and a later work of the class of adaptations in tapestry, to wit, a copy of Sandro Botticelli's "Primavera," cannot claim to be particularly happy in effect. It was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1896. For the choice of subject it may not indeed be fair to hold Mr. Morris responsible, since the tapestry was woven specially to the order of Mr. Blunt. Of this panel Mrs. Mabel Cox, in "The Artist," remarks: "The colouring is especially good, the faded tones of the old colours being reproduced without any loss of the rich glow. To do this is to encounter no small difficulty, considering the material under command." But the same writer, while pronouncing that the subject "is certainly a good design for tapestry," is obliged to admit that "it is by no means certain . . . that lovers of Botticelli's masterpiece will be pleased to see it in its new form."

Of Morris and Co.'s tapestry the most important work altogether, and one that may justly be described as monumental, is that executed from Sir Edward Burne-Jones's designs for the dining-room at Stanmore Hall. The scheme of this decoration is to illustrate the Arthurian romance, more particularly that part of it which deals with the quest of the San-Graal. The main division consists of a series of figure-subject panels. Their height is uniformly eight feet, but they vary in width according to the dimensions of the several spaces they have to fill round the room. Of these panels it will suffice to describe one, which, though neither the largest nor the most conspicuous, is yet, in point of beauty, second to none in the set. The subject is "The Failure of Sir Lancelot." It contains but two figures. In the foreground Sir Lancelot is represented lying asleep, his back leaning against the stone side of a water-cistern, his feet pointing to the door, shut against him and guarded by an angel-warder of the Temple of the Holy Grail. The angel's wings, blue as the depths of a sapphire, harmonize with the paler blue of his sleeves;

while his white and yellow brocaded robe contrasts the rich crimson surcoat of the mailed knight, whose limbs are encased partly in plate, partly in chain, armour. The execution of the latter must have needed almost as much technical skill as do human features. In this case the difficulty was greatly enhanced by the fact that the whole composition is in a subdued tone of colour, with beams of strong light streaming through the chinks of the door and glinting, where they fall, upon armour and blades of grass. A masterly reserve together with the utmost delicacy of treatment were required to save a scene treated in such a manner as this from degenerating into melodrama. But the feat has been accomplished nevertheless. Other panels depict "The arrival of Sir Galahad to take his place in the Siege Perilous," "The Knights departing on the Quest," "The Failure of Sir Gawaine," "The Vision of the Holy Grail," and, what is really a part of the last subject, a ship riding at anchor at a short distance from the shore which, strewn with shells and overgrown with tufts of coarse grass, occupies the foreground.

The panels which form the upper and principal division of the Stanmore Hall tapestries are woven separately from the lower part, which runs beneath in the form of a detached band nearly five feet deep. Along the top of this dado is a scroll, with a legend giving a brief explanation of the particular subject which is represented immediately above. Below the scroll is represented a deer-haunted thicket, upon the branches of which are hung the escutcheons of the Knights of the Round Table, all with their proper heraldic charges. The different pieces of tapestry which compose this magnificent set were placed *in situ* severally, as they were finished; the entire work from first to last occupying between three and four years to complete.

In the various specimens of tapestry woven by Messrs. Morris and Co. the same texture is not to be found in every case. Thus, for bold effects a thicker wool was used, which required fewer stitches in a given space, and entailed therefore less work proportionately than the finer specimens. At one time the firm endeavoured to obtain in the coarser



DETAIL OF VELIN TAPESTRY
AT STANMORE HALL.

FROM "THE VISION OF THE HOLY GRAIL,"
DESIGNED BY SIR J. BURNE-JONES, BART.

tapestries a better finish in the faces, and so on, by introducing in those parts a greater number of warp threads and using a finer wool, but, the result not proving satisfactory, the experiment was not renewed. In some cases, where a richer effect is desired than could be obtained from wool alone, the high lights and other details are worked in with silk. For the Stanmore series, notwithstanding their large scale, a moderately fine web was decided upon, of a uniform texture, *i.e.*, the warp threads sixteen to the inch throughout. Questioned with regard to the latter work by a representative of "The Daily Chronicle," Mr. Morris explained that one of the larger panels, the same that was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1893, had taken two years to weave. It was the handiwork of three persons, as many that is as could sit comfortably side by side across the warp. "The people who made it—and this is by far the most interesting thing about it—are boys, at least they are grown up by this time—entirely trained in our own shop. It is really freehand work, remember, not slavishly copying a pattern, like the '*basse lisse*' method; and they came to us with no knowledge of drawing whatever, and have learnt every single thing they know under our training. And most beautifully they have done it! I don't think you could want a better example than this of the value of apprenticeship. Our superintendent, Mr. Dearle, has of course been closely watching the work all the time, and perhaps he has put in a few bits, like the hands and the faces, with his own hands; but with this exception every bit has been done by these boys."

In the case of the tapestry designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, it was not that artist's usual custom to supply full-size working cartoons. His original drawings for the Stanmore series are not above fifteen inches high. He prepared these compositions from studies of figures and groups drawn with his wonted care; but, for the rest, there was little else beyond slight colour-tinting to serve as guide in the execution of the work. Such being the condition in which the designs came into Messrs. Morris and Co.'s hands, it was necessary for each of these drawings

to be enlarged by photography, in squares varying in size and number according to the full dimensions required. These enlarged sections were then fitted together, and the whole, now of the proper size, submitted, together with a small coloured sketch showing the scheme of colouring proposed by the firm, to the designer for his approval or revision. On these enlargements Burne-Jones confined himself, for the most part, to working up the heads and hands; preferring to leave the ornamental accessories, the patterns of brocades on the draperies, the flowers, &c., to Messrs. Morris and Co., on whose behalf they were generally undertaken by Mr. Dearle, who has been associated with Mr. Morris in the work for many years past. Over and above Mr. Dearle's share in the matter, considerable latitude in the choice and arrangement of tints in shading, &c., was, and is, invariably allowed to the executants themselves, who are, in fact, both by nature and training, artists and no mere animated machines. All three of the tapestry looms at Merton are constructed on the high warp system, that being the method of hand-weaving which Mr. Morris approved, and the only one, therefore, which he cared to revive.

One of the vicissitudes of the firm was a fire which occurred in October, 1877, caused, as it was believed, through the igniting of a beam in the chimney of the hinder part of the house at Queen Square, the result being that the back premises were gutted and much valuable property belonging to the firm destroyed, to say nothing of the dislocation of business or of the disorder and inconvenience unavoidable during the rebuilding. The loss included the stock of linoleum then ready for use and lying stored up in that part of the building which was burnt. No branch of decoration, however humble and commonplace, came amiss to William Morris. He designed and caused to be carried out two patterns for linoleum, that useful form of floor-covering which is commonly not to be obtained except of such fashion that a great many persons are deterred from using it. For is it not next to impossible for anyone of taste to put up with

the vicious counterfeits of parquetry, encaustic tiles, mosaic, Chinese matting, Brussels carpet, Berlin wool-work, and such like, which comprise the more part of commercial patterns in oil-cloths, linoleums, &c.? Morris was clearly of that opinion when he undertook to design for this material.

Messrs. Morris and Co.'s furniture was not of William Morris's own design, flat ornament being essentially his *métier*. Long before the business of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. was started, Madox Brown had been designing furniture, and in that capacity had had the mortification of being refused a place in the exhibitions of the old Hogarth Club, because, forsooth, his designs were not, in the eyes of the committee, to be regarded as "fine art proper." When, however, the firm, largely owing to his instrumentality, had come into existence, both Madox Brown and Rossetti, too, supplied a certain number of designs for furniture. A larger quantity were provided by Mr. Webb; and, still more recently, Mr. George Jack, a pupil of Mr. Webb's, designed furniture for the firm. Morris used to regret the decay of the art of carving at the present day, and the consequent difficulty of obtaining suitable carving for the ornamentation of furniture, &c. However, that of Mr. Jack supplies some admirable examples, while other furniture of the firm is decorated with inlay or painted ornament of good design in a style to harmonize with Morris fabrics. In the early days the cabinet-making and carpentry were carried on in the workshop belonging to the firm in Ormond Yard. Quite lately they purchased the business of Messrs. Holland and Son, in whose former premises all the cabinet-work, &c., on the part of Messrs. Morris and Co. is now executed.

The firm since their foundation have undertaken in whole or in part the furnishing and decorating of a large number of private houses; as, for instance, the Old Swan House at Chelsea and Stanmore Hall, Stanmore, the country residence of Mr. W. K. D'Arcy. The interior of the latter, a very characteristic house, is thus described in "The Studio" of September, 1893: "The interest lies in

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the applied decoration added to a building seventy years old, which had been remodelled some time since by Mr. Brightwen Binyon. But it is only with the final re-decoration that we are concerned here. In this Messrs. William Morris and Co. have had a free hand, not merely in such matters as usually fall within the scope of decorators, but in the hangings, furniture, and carpets. Hence the work shows a curious instance of one very individual artist fettered by existing features not in themselves remarkable, in a building not ideally adapted to his particular style; but, on the other hand, with control of many matters that do not usually come within the limits of either architect or decorator—particularly the carpets, which, designed specially for the places they occupy, form an extremely important feature in Mr. Morris's scheme of colour. The dining-room, however, was built anew, and in it one feels the larger scope at the artist's disposal has resulted in more complete beauty. Its chimney-piece of solid white marble is . . . of the fashion Mr. Morris employed many years ago in his own house at Bexley Heath." A description has been given above of the series of tapestries designed to represent scenes from the legend of King Arthur, and manufactured by Morris and Co. for the dining-room at Stanmore. "The tables and chairs, the buffet . . . and the dining hatch, deserve special notice, while the carpet is perhaps the most noteworthy item in a splendid room, since it is one of Mr. Morris's most successful designs and large enough to extort admiration on that ground alone. The ceiling, in delicately moulded plaster, also commands attention, and yet keeps its right place. The painted ceilings, both in the entrance hall and staircase, deserve study, not because they are 'hand-painted,' but because of their beautiful forms and dainty colours. The delicate tones, like those of embroidery on old white silk, are in shades of pinks, purples, tender greens, and spring yellows, on a pale creamy ground, the whole bright yet light and with an aerial effect. . . . This lightness of the ceilings and carpets, with the untouched oak of much of the panelling and furniture, gives an air of gaiety . . . most

unusual in work of this school. On the walls of the vestibule a delicate pattern in . . . silk and linen, and in the drawing-room a rich warm silk tapestry, unite in preserving the same harmony of sumptuous decoration kept within proper proportion. One has but to compare Stanmore Hall with houses of equally elaborate adornment to feel that in this respect it has no rival. The large ornament and bold forms Mr. Morris delights in, prove their power to blend into a perfect whole, elaborate but in no way overwhelming. The modelled ceiling in the vestibule, and several others in the house, are left in pure low-toned white, so that their rich decoration keeps its place. The staircase, with its solid balustrade of oak inlaid with dark walnut, is an important feature in the central hall."

The firm have appeared before the public in yet another way, to wit, in the capacity of stage decorators, to whom two plays by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones owed their settings more or less. The first was "The Crusaders," which had a run of three months from the beginning of November, 1891, at the Avenue Theatre; the other, "The Case of Rebellious Susan," of which the first performance, under the management of Mr. Charles Wyndham, took place at the Criterion Theatre early in the year 1895, acts 1 and 3 being arranged by Messrs. Morris and Co.

The firm have been represented from time to time at exhibitions of industrial art in the provinces as well as in the metropolis. The several Arts and Crafts Exhibitions that have been held in London and in Manchester, for instance, were supplied with plentiful selections of Messrs. Morris and Co.'s products in the various branches of design and handicraft in which they are engaged. In such ways as this, so far from being close-handed or jealous of exposing his designs too openly, Mr. Morris was well known for his liberality. Quite careless of his own interests in the matter of copyrights, &c., he used freely to send specimens of his wall-papers and textiles to different local schools of art all over the country, until unhappily it was found that unfair advantage of his



MESSRS. MORRIS & CO.'S WORKS.

MERTON ABBEY.

generosity was so often taken that of late years the supplies had to be stopped.

In 1877 Messrs. Morris and Co. took their present premises at 449, Oxford Street, comprising shop-front, show-rooms, offices, &c., but the business still continued to be carried on in part at the old place in Queen Square until the end of 1881, when everything that remained was definitely transferred thence to the Oxford Street house. Meanwhile the firm had acquired the property at Merton, Surrey, and set up their works on the former site of the abbey there, in June, 1881. Morris kept the place in much the same condition in which he found it, with the exception of some slight renovations to the weaving-shed. Since it is often interesting to learn how others see us—how such things strike a foreigner, a short extract on the subject of Morris and Co.'s works from "Passé le Detroit," by M. Gabriel Mourey, may not be amiss here. The French critic gives his impressions thus: "The art workshops of Merton Abbey stand in an immense field amid tall trees and charming scenery. Workshops did I say? It is an

ugly word that conjures up visions of grimy smoke, creaking machinery, and bodily toil. No, there is nothing of all that. It is a sort of large farmhouse built on one floor, surrounded by foliage and greenery, close by the bank of a small stream, the Wandle, which winds in and out with happy, joyous murmurs. Such is the workshop of Merton Abbey. Nothing is manufactured there except by hand. No machine-power is used, either steam or electric, but implements of the simplest construction, the most primitive in kind, the old tools, the old handicrafts of four or five centuries ago. The predominant feature is that the artisan is allowed almost perfect liberty of talent and imagination in the development of his work. This is especially the case in the tapestry and glass-work studios, where the most exquisite marvels of art are turned out. The workman takes part in the work, becomes artist, and imparts his own personality to the thing created, of which a rough plan has first been drawn up by the master. The hand-press is used . . . or the velvet and cretonne work is done directly with the hand. Thus is avoided that monotonous stiffness peculiar to the work of modern machinery, and further, it encourages the workman to take a more personal interest in his labour."

On the same subject Mr. Alan S. Cole writes in "The Art Journal" in 1893: "I may be mistaken, but I believe that in this country Mr. Morris stands alone in the variety of intricate hand-woven silks, &c., which he produces. Many are, no doubt, resuscitations of ingenious twelfth-century methods. But for an occasional distant whistle and rumble of trains, a twelfth-century Sicilian weaver might, without sense of anomaly, take his seat in the weaving-shed at Merton, and find himself almost as much at home with the handicrafts pursued there as he was seven hundred years ago with those which engaged him in the palace at Palermo. . . . In Mr. Morris's factory, apparently in contradiction of a modern spirit of specializing and separately pursuing branches of textile manufacture and treatment, are to be found in operation the three technically distinct forms of weaving—namely, tapestry, carpet, and

ordinary shuttle weaving. . . . Besides these, there are rooms for dyeing wools and threads used in the looms and frames, a long upper story where cotton and other printing by hand-blocks is done, and store-rooms and offices. Adjoining the irregular group of workshops, and commanding a view of the garden, with its trees, and stream, is a last century house, in which is Mr. Morris's studio, and from which he has easy access to his workrooms. An extra ounce of indigo to strengthen the dye, an additional five minutes' immersion of threads in the vat, a weft of colour to be swept through the warp in a moment of inspiration, a dappling of bright points to lighten some over-sombre hue in the grounding of a carpet, are some of the details in technical and artistic administration constantly receiving the attention of the director of the establishment, who thus secures a standard of artistic production at which the systematized operations of a steam-driven factory have not arrived."

Again, a writer in "The Spectator" of November 24th, 1883, in an article "On the Wandle," describing the Abbey works at Merton, says that to anyone "passing through the gates from the high road, the mill and Wandle present themselves much mixed up together. The river as we saw it was shimmering in the sunlight of a bright November afternoon; little eddies of the stream carried light and glimmer into dark corners, round the many angles of the scattered building. Near its edge the stream is shedded over, to protect some bright-brown wooden pegs, turning on a wheel, through the mysteries of which bright blue stuff is dripping and splashing. . . . Here is none of the ordinary neat pomposity of 'business premises.' . . . We turn through doors into a large, low room, where the hand-made carpets are being worked. It is not crowded. In the middle sits a woman finishing off some completed rugs; in a corner is a large pile of worsted of a magnificent red, heaped becomingly into a deep-coloured straw basket. The room is full of sunlight and colour. The upright frames face you at right angles, with a long row of windows looking close upon the bright-shining

river. . . . The strong, level afternoon light shines round the figures of the young girls seated in rows on low benches along the frames, and brightens to gold some of the fair heads. Above and behind them rows of bobbins of many-coloured worsteds, stuck on pegs, shower down threads of beautiful colours, which are caught by the deft fingers, passed through strong threads (fixed uprightly in the frames, to serve as a foundation), tied in a knot, slipped down in their place, snipped even with the rest of the carpet, all in a second of time, by the little maidens. Twenty-five rows does each do in a day,—that means about two inches of carpet. One of the rugs being made is of silk, instead of worsted, very exquisite in quality of surface. . . . It is a delightful workroom. . . . Out again by the Wandle, and across a bridge . . . you pass through a garden; the paths and grass are covered with golden leaves, and the fallen chestnuts roll under your feet, a faded sunflower hangs its head pathetically over the stream. . . . You pass an open door and see men working over vats . . . where the dyeing is done; . . . but we turn into another room, where the hand-loom is working busily, the shuttles flying to and fro between the webs with a speed like lightning. . . . There are many looms, and beautiful-coloured threads are being woven into beautiful materials on every side. Men work the looms; the only women we saw employed at the mill were those working the hand-made carpets. We go on to the rooms where the printing and the stained glass is done. Both are reached by outside wooden staircases. In the glass room we see cartoons by Burne-Jones and by Morris himself in process of being copied. There are many other rooms, for stores, in the old mill. In no part of it does there seem any crowding, either of things or people; the work seems all going on cheerfully and steadily, without hurry." The writer continues: "In the work we have been seeing what a strength there is of individuality, and what an entire absence of commonplace self-importance; what a natural way of doing things, and what a sense of distinction in all that is done! . . . The genius of

less beautiful cartoons the possession of Mr. Fairfax Murray. In these figures may be discerned a refined type of features of a character all his own, akin to and yet quite distinct from the type of either Rossetti or Burne-Jones. One cartoon, in colours, represents an angel holding a scroll; the other, in monochrome, six angels in adoration. It is twofold and was designed for wall-painting. One half of it was lent by the owner to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1893. At the same exhibition was shown a small figure-panel of singular charm, drawn for embroidery and carried out in that medium by the designer's daughter, Mrs. Sparling. Next, as regards animal shapes, Morris would seem to have restricted himself principally to dragons, rabbits, and various kinds of birds, such as the peacock, the dove, the thrush, the woodpecker, and the partridge. But it was chiefest in the adaptation of floral and vegetable forms that he excelled. In this sphere one of Morris's most characteristic types was that "glittering leafage" which, for want of a more accurate name, it is convenient to designate as the Acanthus. "No form of ornament," says Morris, "has gone so far or lasted so long as this; it has been infinitely varied, used by almost all following styles" (*i.e.*, after the Greek) "in one shape or another, and performed many another office besides its original one." So trite and stereotyped indeed had this familiar variety of foliage become that it might have been supposed that its last word, as it were, had long since been said in ornament; its powers of further growth exhausted. On the contrary, however, to such magnificent developments was it brought by Morris's creative genius,—its grand coils of foliage turning and counter-turning this way and that, its serrated edges bent over and back again,—that it seems to have been redeemed and made fertile anew with a splendid vitality, before which open out possibilities wellnigh limitless.

Nor did the associations of his Oxford days fail to impress themselves upon Morris's art. Thus he made frequent use of the fritillary—or snake's-head, as it is popularly called—whose chequered, purplish head is one



ANGEL WITH SCROLL.

CARTOON BY WILLIAM MORRIS. IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR. C. FAIRLAX MURRAY.



ANGELS IN ADORATION.



FROM CARTOONS BY WILLIAM MORRIS
IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. C. FAIRLAX MURRAY.

of the characteristic sights in the grass-lands by the river-side, particularly at Iffley, where it may be seen nodding in profusion in the late spring. Another favourite form of his was the long and slender spike of the wild tulip, which, as Morris must have been aware, although it is not proved that he ever saw it flowering there in his time, grew in the meadow bordering on the Cherwell, to the south of the Botanical Gardens at Oxford. Or was this rather one of those flowers which he borrowed from Persian ornament? Morris indeed loved best the familiar forms of our English flowers, and most "the queen of them all—the flower of flowers," the rose. This flower is one which "has been grown double," says he, "from I don't know when. The double rose was a gain to the world, a new beauty was given us by it, and nothing taken away, since the wild rose grows in every hedge. Yet even then one might be excused for thinking that the wild rose was scarce improved on, for nothing can be more beautiful in general growth or in detail than a wayside bush of it, nor can any scent be as sweet and pure as its scent. Nevertheless the garden rose had a new beauty of abundant form, while its leaves had not lost the wonderfully delicate texture of the wild one. The full colour it had gained, from the blush rose to the damask, was pure and true amidst all its added force, and though its scent had certainly lost some of the sweetness of the eglantine, it was fresh still, as well as so abundantly rich." On the whole, however, Morris's counsel—which he followed himself—was: "Be very shy of double flowers; choose the old columbine where the clustering doves are unmistakable and distinct, not the double one, where they run into mere tatters. Choose . . . the old china-aster with the yellow centre, that goes so well with the purple-brown stems and curiously coloured florets, instead of the lumps that look like cut paper, of which we are now so proud. Don't be swindled out of that wonder of beauty, a single snowdrop; there is no gain and plenty of loss in the double one. More loss still in the double sunflower, which is a coarse-coloured and dull plant, whereas the single one, though a

late comer to our gardens, is by no means to be despised, since it will grow anywhere, and is both interesting and beautiful, with its sharply chiselled yellow florets relieved by the quaintly patterned sad-coloured centre clogged with honey and beset with bees and butterflies." Though this advice of Morris's for avoiding "over-artificiality in flowers" is given, as a matter of fact, with a view to the selecting of plants for a garden, it nevertheless applies to the choice of flowers in ornament as well. "Many plants," there are, in his opinion, "which are curiosities only, which Nature meant to be grotesque, not beautiful, and which are generally the growth of hot countries, where things sprout over quick and rank. Take note that the strangest of these come from the jungle and the tropical waste, from places where man is not at home but is an intruder, an enemy. . . . But there are some flowers (inventions of men, *i.e.*, florists) which are bad colour altogether, and not to be used at all. Scarlet geraniums, for instance, or the yellow calceolaria, which are indeed not uncommonly grown together profusely, in order, I suppose, to show that even flowers can be thoroughly ugly." Such forms then one need not look to find in Morris's designs. But the flowers one does recognize therein, besides those already enumerated, are the peony and poppy, the honeysuckle, carnation and iris, larkspur and anemone, the daisy and the marigold. These were the mainsprings of Morris's inspiration. And it is this he intended to convey when he said that ornament should have a meaning, should express something, *viz.*, that it ought to give the impression of having been founded upon some object in actual existence, instead of being, like most of the "ornament" of the Louis XIV., XV., and XVI. periods, a mere shapeless and senseless elaboration of nothing at all. At the same time Morris's decorative work is as far as possible from being didactic. He never used it as the vehicle for the expression of a lesson or theory; never set himself to preach or to expound through the medium of ornament, as some do. His is the very type of æsthetic design. "He was too true an artist to

follow art into its byways of moral significance and thereby cripple its broader arms." This was Hall Caine's account of Rossetti; but the words might apply with even greater truth to William Morris. No bogey of the pulpit or of the platform lurks within the folds of his velvets; no homily is to be discovered in the colours of his chintzes; no allegory latent in the lines of his wall-papers. Their charm is just what it appears to the eye to be: there is nothing else concealed beneath their surface. One may enjoy the beauty of them, and one may revel in it to one's heart's content with the confident assurance that the designer is not the man to take a mean advantage of one's being absorbed in admiration for the purpose of cozening one, as a reluctant child is cozened, into swallowing a stealthy pill enfolded in a delicious wrapping of sweet-stuff. Artless as a child himself, Morris was in absolute sympathy with, and shared, the child's view of the case. And since few things are more distasteful to anybody than to be edified *malgré lui*, Morris does not attempt to do so surreptitiously. But when, on the other hand, he has a message to deliver, as for instance in his Socialistic writings, he states the matter plainly and straightforwardly, in terms, at times, outspoken even to bluntness. There is no fine writing then, nor any precious periods nor phrases to dazzle and captivate the senses.

With Morris, then, art and literature were kept quite distinct; their functions never confounded by him. He was too whole-hearted in his devotion to both to impair the integrity of either by making it subservient to the other or dependent upon that other for support. Indeed in his case neither had need to be supplemented by the other; nor to derive any powers of fascination from without, but held to its own perfection in either sphere untrammelled. Quotations from prose and poetry may have to be tacked on to the Academy picture so as to pander to the taste of a public incapable of feeling any appreciable joy in beauty for its own sake; of enthusiasm for anything but what embodies a sentiment or has a story belonging to it. But it was otherwise with Morris's work. Take,

for example, the verses he wove into his tapestries. The lettering of the words, the folds of the ribands on which they were inscribed, both alike being carefully considered and integral parts of the design, are pure ornament—no less than that and no more. The only Morris pattern that can be said to have even a remote connection with literature is the "Brother Rabbits" cretonne; and that merely by way of a reminiscence of the amusement afforded by the foibles of "Brer Rabbit" in Joel Chandler Harris's "Uncle Remus." The design does not attempt of course to illustrate the book. For practical convenience, to avoid confusion in the ordinary course of business, it was indispensable for Morris's numerous designs to be distinguished each by a different name. But as often as not the title was purely arbitrary and had little or no connection with the particular pattern in point. Thus a list of names was taken from the tributaries of the Thames, but these names, it is needless to say, made no pretence to be suggestive of the subject-matter of the designs by which they were borne respectively.

The correlation of the arts is a subject upon which, of late years, a great deal has been said and written. The principle is one which is supposed to dominate the æsthetic school above all others; yet one hears little enough of its perilous tendencies, or of how conspicuously and how successfully Morris escaped them; or how again and again he insisted that it was wrong for anything to be expressed in the terms of one art which would have been expressed better in the terms of another. The process leads invariably to a nondescript product, that, by whichever standard it be measured, fails to come up to the proper requirements. One has heard much talk of "painter-poets," "musician-painters," and recently even of "poet-upholsterers"—titles for which there is about as much warrant as for that of "Cardinal-Archbishop." One has heard tell also of "painted poems," "painted allegories," "sculptured poems," and, even worse hybrids, of different "colour-symphonies," "nocturnes," "variations," "harmonies," "scherzos," and more nonsense and to spare of the like sort. Morris could

not away with any of these eccentric methods of "making enemies"—which, being interpreted, is, of course, advertising oneself; nor indeed would his straightforward principles have allowed him to stoop to such artifices, to prostitute his art in such wise. In a word, his designs owe their attractiveness to no adventitious charm of association or issue outside themselves, but stand supreme, resting their claim to homage on nothing else but their own inherent merits, their æsthetic qualities of form and colour combined with their appropriateness for the purpose for which they are intended to be used. And so Morris called himself only "an ornamentalist, a maker of would-be pretty things"!

As in the realm of poetry William Morris made good his claim to be the representative of Chaucer and of Spenser; so, in the genealogy of art, none has so indisputable a title as he to be the lineal descendant of the Gothic artists. There is not the slightest taint of the Renaissance or of Japanese influence in his work—in which respect, indeed, his position is remarkable and almost unique among the designers of modern times. Withal there may be traced in him a certain strain of Persian and of Byzantine origin. In the blending of these several elements, now one, now another being present in greater proportion than the rest, might give a certain complexion to any given design; but above all else the strong individuality of William Morris himself always prevailed, making all his decoration of one perfectly sustained and consistent style; and such that no one having the most superficial acquaintance with ornamental design could mistake Morris's for anybody else's work. However, it was not vouchsafed him to be spared the usual fate which a master of style must suffer at the hands of those less gifted than himself. "His power is proved,"—to quote once more from a writer in "The Spectator," whose views on this very point happen to be in direct antagonism to those of Mr. Robert Buchanan,— "by his many imitators. Nearly all the better kind of designs in the shops are, as far as they are good, cribs from Morris, just altered sufficiently 'to prevent unpleasant-

ness.' His willow-pattern paper is taken very boldly, stamped upon a carpet, and a trellis of little squares added by the accommodator. Even Paris taste, that mixture of fantastic extravagance, persistence in mediocrity, and industrious finish of detail, took up the style of Morris colours some years ago, and flavoured it with the usual touch of French morbid cynicism by calling the colours '*teints dégradés*.'" What an inversion of the order of things! And how quickly must the memory of the beautiful old colours (the only colours known and used until the lurid discoveries of Perkins blinded men's eyes with the glare and vulgarity of coal-tar) have faded from the mental vision of French folk, how utterly become obliterated, if the same colours when presented once more to them, not a quarter of a century afterwards, could strike them only as being some novel form of corruption! It is quite a mistake to imagine that Morris either had himself introduced or approved of the introduction of the dull and gloomy colours in the popular estimate associated with the art movement. In one of the addresses included in "Hopes and Fears for Art" Morris, though not denying that crudeness of colouring is a possible danger, warned his audience in most emphatic terms against "getting . . . colour dingy and muddy, a worse fault than the other because less likely to be curable. All right-minded craftsmen who work in colour," he continues, "will strive to make their work as bright as possible, as full of colour as the nature of the work will allow it to be." And again he says: "Do not fall into the trap of a dingy, bilious-looking yellow-green, a colour to which I have a special and personal hatred, because (if you will excuse my mentioning personal matters) I have been supposed to have somewhat brought it into vogue. I assure you I am not really responsible for it."

"I am an artist," wrote Morris, "or workman, with a strong inclination to exercise what capacities I may have, and a determination to do nothing shabby if I can help it." Now one of the worst forms of shabbiness in Morris's eyes, was plagiarism, which he abhorred for artistic no less than

for ethical reasons. "Everyone ought to do his own work," was the maxim by which he was guided himself and would have others guided, because he knew, only too well, the paralysing and destructive effects exercised on the faculty of invention by indolent and disingenuous copyism. This, then, is what he says on the duty of exerting one's own originality in decorative design: "Your convention must be your own, and not borrowed from other times and peoples; or at the least you must make it your own by thoroughly understanding both the nature and the art you are dealing with. If you do not heed this, I do not know but what you may not as well turn to and draw laborious portraits of natural forms of flower and bird and beast, and stick them on your walls anyhow. It is true you will not get ornament so, but you may learn something for your trouble; whereas, using an obviously true principle as a stalking-horse for laziness of purpose and lack of invention will but injure art all round, and blind people to the truth of that very principle."

In his evidence before the Royal Commission on Technical Education in 1882, after stating that the business he carried on comprised weaving, dyeing, cotton printing, carpet weaving, glass painting and cabinet making, Morris said: "I make mostly my own designs; I do not employ designers because, amongst other reasons, it is so very difficult to get a due amount of originality out of them; the designs which one gets are too hackneyed, and there is the same sort of idea harped upon for ever and ever. Mine is quite a peculiar trade." And, in reply to the question: "Your forte is originality?" he answered in the affirmative. "It is necessary for our business merely as a commercial affair. I need not say it is desirable in everything in which one applies design to the industrial arts." The vast amount of original design produced by Morris is almost incredible. If "great genius means," as Mr. Marion Crawford says it does, "great and constant creative power before all things;" if "it means wealth of resource and invention; . . . quantity as well as quality," then William Morris was surely a genius of greatness pre-

eminent. It would be difficult for anyone who had not been admitted, as it were, behind the scenes at Messrs. Morris and Co.'s, nor been shown the mass of sketch-designs and cartoons prepared by William Morris's own hand for execution in various mediums ; or for anyone who had not been in the habit of calling at his house and finding him, as was his wont, at work or, if resting for a few minutes, with the ink or the colour scarcely dried upon the paper before him ; it would be difficult for such an one to comprehend the prodigious industry of the man. It was simply astounding. Indeed he is not exaggerating when he says, in one of his lectures, that having once tried to think what would happen to him if he were forbidden his ordinary daily work, he knew that he should die of despair and weariness, unless he could straightway take to something else which he could make his daily work ; and that the reason clearly was because he loved the work itself ; nay, even mechanical work was pleasant to him, provided that it were not too mechanical. Thus he who, while insisting on the universal duty of work, yet would have had labour press unduly on no man, was unsparing of himself. The precepts Morris enjoined on others were in his own case no empty formulas. If any man ever practised to the letter what he preached, it was William Morris, who set an example of untiring activity and application that might well put other people to shame. Never was a more busy, a more conscientious worker than he. Thoroughness was one of his most prominent qualities. Nothing was allowed by him to be done hurriedly or carelessly ; nothing left in an unfinished state that could be finished ; nothing passed as satisfactory until it had been brought as near as human hands could avail to bring it, to that ideal standard he had conceived of it in his own mind. Formerly he used even to set out with his own hands and square up his designs for tapestry and carpet weaving. But, careful as he was in the preparation of his patterns beforehand, once they were executed, the originals in his eyes were of no further use. In short, he regarded them as so many tools, as means merely to an end, which end attained in the concrete form

of the manufactured article, the *raison d'être* of the design had ceased for him. He used readily to part with, in exchange for books or anything else which he happened for the moment to want, original and unique drawings of his own which one would have supposed of almost priceless worth.

It may be permitted to borrow once more from M. Mourey on the subject of Morris's share in the revival of the industrial arts of this country. Morris, says the French writer, "is especially keen on the art of the Middle Ages, the complex and fertile depths of which he has penetrated with wonderful acuteness, even to restoring it in all its beauty. And it is through those unknown workers who have by their labours and the fruits of their imagination profusely adorned not only cathedral stones but the most trifling objects, that William Morris has been able to bring about this Restoration of Decorative Art of which he himself is the originator and master. He is indeed an earnest worker who has sounded the older methods and early formulas, and has attempted and realized all with wonderful breadth and originality. . . . Now this imagination, this power to create, this rare gift of transforming one's subject into seductive harmony of form, happy combination of lines, enchanting rhythms of colour, or developing it by unexpected deductions, enriching it with one's fancy until it blossoms forth in beauty, melancholy, or merely fresh and simple tones—what other worker in decorative art possesses to such a degree as he? But apart from his innate gift, the tools employed are well known: earnest, attentive and sincere study of nature; thorough and well-grounded knowledge of past epochs instead of that servile imitation with which we content ourselves; and above all—what so often proves a true stumbling-block in decorative art—scrupulous heed that the caprices of invention, colour and form shall be in perfect accord with the requirements of the material."

"And his influence? To give a fair answer to this question one must have lived an English life. It has indeed been deep, restorative, transforming the outward

and decorative side of life, adorning the home with the pleasures of art—and we all know how full of significance that word *home* is. We meet with the fertile results of his mind on all sides. . . . It is a real style he has created, a style which owes its origin to that perfect, clear and expressive style of the Middle Ages, which alone is capable of providing the nineteenth century with material and ideas suitable to it, which passes by Japanese and Persian art to develop in the original, fruitful imagination and temperament of the northern."

A writer in "The Edinburgh Review," speaking of Morris's wide-spread influence in art decoration, says: "Even in the ordinary work exposed for sale in furniture shops the effect of the change is manifest; tradesmen . . . have been compelled to do their best to follow the change in public demand. And this improvement in household taste is the direct work of Morris more than of anyone else. He set the example of designing furniture in accordance with the requirements and expression of structure (in which respect furniture properly follows much the same principles as architecture); of considering harmony of colour in the carpets, papering, and other decorations of a room; of treating designs based on natural foliage on true decorative principles, conventionalizing the forms employed, and teaching the public the importance of beauty of line and of preserving the balance and spacing of decorative detail. . . . Morris's perceptions in this class of work were not based on any mere dilettante preferences. They were the result of a close and unremitting study of the subject. It is said by those who knew him well that no man had such a thorough and exhaustive knowledge of the technical processes of old work, so far as we now have the means of knowing them. Design in all the decorative arts is, or should be, based upon or largely influenced by technique; it was the perception of this, and the knowledge of the technical requirements and possibilities in connection with each class of material, which led him to the right path in the treatment of design."

Mr. Herbert Horne, in "The Saturday Review," rightly

said of Morris that "in his genius for fine craftsmanship he was alone; a unique figure of our time." He then points out the beneficial influence of a cultured age like the fifteenth century, and how such an influence "is nowhere shown to more evident advantage than in the production of those goods and fabrics which are intended for the uses of daily life, but into which the element of beauty enters in some degree or another; the craft of cabinet making, for example," or "the weaving of figured textiles;" and he contrasts that desirable state of things with the present. "In an age like our own, when the sphere of the practical utilities of life is wholly divorced from the sphere of art, this element of beauty is apt to be mistaken, or lost sight of, by those who practise these crafts, and an indifference to produce beautifully is soon followed by an indifference to produce well. It is here precisely that the conditions of good craftsmanship assert themselves; reminding us that the craftsman is neither wholly concerned with mere utility on the one hand, nor with mere beauty on the other; but that his productions must be fitted to the uses for which they are intended; that they must be well made; and that they must be made with a due sense of beauty. For us, the tradition of such craftsmanship has long been broken; and, to recover it, the craftsman is forced to revert to methods which have been lost or forgotten, to the productions of some other age than our own. In this attempt Morris went beyond anyone of his time. The success, for example, with which he revived the older and simpler methods of the dyer's art, and the use of vegetable dyes, has contributed not a little to the beauty of his tapestries, his silks, and his other textile and printed fabrics. His painted glass, his decorative paintings and furniture . . . all show the fine instinct with which he returned to sound principles of good craftsmanship, employing only the simplest and best of materials." "He has done much," says another writer, "to rehabilitate the pride in workmanship that was at one time a characteristic of English workmen, but which of late years, under the influence of commercialism," and other causes, "we are said to have lost."

Enough has now been said to show that William Morris was no mere dabbler but a specialist in the arts; how that he grappled with the technical difficulties—aye, and the commercial difficulties, too—of one handicraft after another; how that, once having taken up any particular branch of industry, he never let it go until he had made himself an expert in all the intricacies of it; and how, while handling it as any practical man of business might do, over and above all that, he dignified it through the riches of his own transcendent imagination, bringing it into accord with his own refined sense of beauty. It is thus impossible to over-estimate the influence of William Morris in the improvement of household taste. When he “began his crusade against ugliness and bad work, the art of house decoration,” says a writer in “The Standard,” “was at its lowest ebb,” and “there was little produced which was not positively repulsive both in execution and design.” But, thanks to Morris, the remedy for so deplorable a state of things is with us. In the establishment of the decorative firm which bears his name he provided the public with both an illustration of his teaching and also a practical means of putting it into effect in their own surroundings. How great a multitude of houses he has thus directly or indirectly beautified none can tell—it is indeed incalculable. “Plain painting,” says Mr. Walter Crane, has “displaced graining and marbling; frankly but freely conventionalized patterns” have “routed the imitative and nosegay kinds. Leaded and stained glass” have “filled the places which were wont to be filled with the blank despair of the ground kind. The white marble mantel-piece” has “turned pale before rich hangings and deep-toned wall-papers, and” has been “dismantled and sent to the churchyard. These” are “some of the most marked effects of the adoption of the new, or a return to older and sounder ideas in domestic decoration.” In short, as Mr. Harry Quilter says, the artistic reform achieved by William Morris is such that “has changed the look of half the houses in London, and substituted art for ugliness all over the kingdom.”

CHAPTER SIX: MORE POETRY.

THAT Morris's poetry subsequent to "The Defence of Guenevere," dealt no more with any incident from the Arthurian cycle is a point to be noted. Of that book itself the concluding and larger portion is devoted to such subjects as are recorded in the pages of mediæval chroniclers, of whom Froissart stands for representative, instead of that remoter age of myth and legend to which King Arthur belongs. That Morris ever wavered in his allegiance to Malory is too much to assert. However, if he was yet in any sort of doubt as to his choice of subjects after "The Defence of Guenevere," he made up his mind, on the appearance of the first instalment of Tennyson's "Idylls" in the following year, to occupy other ground thenceforward. But that "The Defence of Guenevere" would be followed next in order of publication by "The Life and Death of Jason," readers of the former work might possibly not have foreseen. Between Morris's lays of chivalry and his epic of classical theme there was indeed no very obvious connection. From Guenevere to Medea; from the "Quest of the Holy Grail" to the "Quest of the Golden Fleece," the way back might well be regarded as long and over long. But Morris, like every mediæval student and lover of romance, could not fail, sooner or later, to find himself in spirit with Caxton, with Memling, and with the actors in Scott's "Quentin Durward" and "Anne of Geierstein," amid the magnificence of the Court of Burgundy, where Gothic arts and Gothic manners were brought to fullest development. Thence with the ducal founder of the illustrious order of knighthood, second to one only, that of the Garter to wit, in all Christendom, he would be transported by a perfectly historical train of thought, across the gulf of intervening centuries to antique Colchis and the mythic Argonauts. One may take it, in short, that Morris's rendering of the theme is just such as would have presented itself to the mind of the Duke of Burgundy and his contemporaries. The Flemish tapestries of the period furnish the best possible commentary upon this kind of conception of classic story; and it would be in entire accord if Morris's

"Life and Death of Jason" could be illustrated by a similar series of arras panels to those which (formerly belonging to Lausanne Cathedral, and now in the Museum at Berne) represent the histories of Julius Cæsar and of Trajan, or the piece of arras from the Chevalier Bayard's Château near Grenoble, now at South Kensington, representing "A Scene from the Siege of Troy."

("The Life and Death of Jason," in seventeen books, appeared in 1867. It is of epic proportions, being, in fact, "one of the longest narrative poems in the language." The body of the work is composed in rhymed heroic measure, the monotony of which is relieved by the occasional introduction of lyrical songs in octosyllabic metre. (It is to be noted here, as Mr. Saintsbury remarks, that "Mr. Morris did to the heroic couplet what Milton and Wordsworth did to blank verse.") He broke it up, changed its centres of gravity, subjected it to endless varieties of *enjambement*, or overlapping. It was his main care to end a paragraph, to begin a speech, in the middle of a couplet or line," "after the fashion set by Keats," as another writer points out. This plan of not winding up, but carrying the flow of the verse on and on, from one paragraph over to the next, is peculiarly suited to the structure of poetry of mediæval type such as this. It soothes the senses like the untiring, melodious drone of plain-chant, which herein seems (unlike the secular "church-music" of modern composers) to partake of the never-ceasing song of celestial choirs.

The differences between the "Jason" and the "Guenevere" are in some respects more pronounced than the differences between the latter and "The Earthly Paradise," parts of which coincide in point of time more nearly with "The Defence of Guenevere" than the "Life and Death of Jason" does. (By comparison with Morris's "Guenevere," as portrayed both in "The Defence" and in "King Arthur's Tomb," his Medea is almost a piece of marble statuary. Even where her vengeance culminates in the destruction of her rival and in the murder of her own children with her own hands, Medea does not attain to

that tragic intensity displayed, for instance, in "The Haystack in the Floods." The unmitigated savagery of the latter, when the Lady Jehane is torn from the arms of her lover and his head beaten to pieces at her very feet as she is in the act of straining forward for one last kiss of his lips; the depths of dogged despair with which she resigns herself to the awful ordeal of fire or water sooner than yield herself to the man she loathes, have no parallel in "The Life and Death of Jason.") The stream of Morris's verse no longer seethes with passion, nor forces its turbid way about boulders obstructing its passage, but flows evenly now through smooth channels, iris-fringed, amid flowery meads interspersed with quiet homesteads. Withal the air is not charged with the fiery heat of noon-day, but there is diffused over everything, so to speak, a softer, tenderer light, resembling more the subdued glow of afternoon. The very din of battle has a far-away sound that scarcely tends to disturb the prevailing serene sense of repose. This calm, however, is not that which betokens loss of vital energy or power, but rather peace and victory achieved through striving, and at the end of strife.

Notwithstanding that the plot of the story, in its episodes as well as in its main outline, differs but little from the genuine classical one, the setting of the various tableaux is as far removed as possible from any scenes depicted on Greek vases as it is also from the ancient sculptured imagery of frieze or pediment. The whole environment of "The Life and Death of Jason," as told by William Morris, is taken, of all bygone epochs in the world's history, from some one more nearly Gothic than any other. The flavour and glamour of old-world romance clings to the associations conjured up, times and again, by the occurrence of such mediæval words as "aumbrye" and "sere-cloth," "dais" and "vane," "pleasance," "close," "undercroft" and "cloister," (while the characters that figure in the shifting panorama of the tale pass by with rhythmic tread as in some stately pageant, surrounded by an atmosphere now sweet with the fragrance of swinging censers, now resonant with the lilt of carols and the silvery peal of

bells.) To have chosen a subject purely classical and to have given it thus a treatment altogether romantic was a project venturesome even to temerity, but Morris succeeded to the extent that, instead of seeming to do violence against fact and archæology, he made it assume the air of being quite plausible and consistent. If Mr. Lang is correct in supposing that "it was natural in Morris to 'envisage' the Greek heroic age in this way," it is equally certain that "it would not be natural in most other writers." In this new and enchanting fashion of telling a story in verse it was impossible to fail to recognize the rare faculty of a master-poet. "It was all more or less exquisite," says Mr. Saintsbury; "it was all more or less novel." (With its honeyed cadence it exercises a spell and fascination like that of some strange, languorous vision.)

A special witchery is, of course, intended in the beautiful chant wherewith the nymph beguiles Hylas to his undoing. This song, beginning,

"I know a little garden close,
Set thick with lily and red rose,"

is one which Morris himself prized highly; for, lest it should lie buried in the larger work, he resuscitated it purposely under the title of "A Garden by the Sea" in "Poems by the Way." Again, there is Medea's incantation song, by means of which she bewitches into harmlessness the monster that guards the Golden Fleece. Of all the songs in the book the longest, falling, as it does, not far short of 300 lines, is that in antiphonal verses in which the Sirens try to wile Jason's crew, and Orpheus responds with counsels of prudence. The other lyrics in "Jason" are Orpheus's song in Book IV., "O bitter sea, tumultuous sea," &c.; another, in which he encourages the crew of the Argosy, in Book IX.; one, where he sings a marvellous retrospective ode in praise of Saturn's days, in Book X.; and an Epicurean song addressed to Death, in Book XII. Lastly, there is the song of the Hesperides in Book XIV.

Musical language and graphic, while it is at the same time vividly concise—a feature noticed already in "The

Defence of Guenevere"—is no less a marked characteristic of "The Life and Death of Jason;" as, for example:

"Dusk grows the world, and day is weary-faced;"

or where Medea warns Jason of the terrible consequences awaiting herself in the event of the failure of their enterprise, as follows:

"But what thing will be left to me but fire?
The fire of fierce despair within my heart.

* * * * *
* * * * * And in no long space
Real fire of pine-wood in some rocky place
Wreathing about my body greedily,
A dreadful beacon o'er the leaden sea."

In this:

"Already did a bright fire glare
And made the hot air glassy with its heat;"

or in this picture of

"The slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate,
That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass;"

or where, a few lines lower down, the description of the Garden of the Hesperides is continued:

"Nor was there lacking many a living thing
Changed of its nature; for the roebuck there
Walked fearless with the tiger; and the bear
Rolled sleepily upon the fruit-strewn grass
Letting the conies o'er his rough hide pass,
With blinking eyes, that meant no treachery.
Careless the partridge passed the red fox by;
Untouched the serpent left the thrushes brown,
And as a picture was the lion's frown."

Or in this, which contains a striking alliteration:

"And therewithal must I dread many a hand
And writhe beneath the whistle of the whip;"

or, once again:

"Darksome night is well-nigh done,
And earth is waiting silent for the sun."

The poem derives a peculiar charm from the gracefully balanced phrasing of antithesis, of which a few instances only must suffice :

“ And shall we find the worst, who sought the best ? ”

or again :

“ And so began short love and long decay,
Sorrow that bides, and joy that fleets away ; ”

or this, where Medea bids Jason

“ Either die a man or live a king ; ”

or this :

“ Haste, for the night
Is young no more, and danger comes with light ; ”

or again :

“ Therefore she knows
Why this thing perishes, and that thing grows ; ”

or the conclusion of the following passage :

“ O thou fearful one,
Who knowest all my life, who in the breath
Wherein thou prayest help still threatenest death.”

Of longer passages it is impossible to forbear to quote from the description of the starting of the Argonauts on their quest :

“ ’Twixt the thronging people solemnly
The heroes went afoot. * * *
* * *
And as they went the roses rained on them
From windows glorious with the well-wrought hem
Of many a purple cloth ; and all their spears
Were twined with blossoms that the fair earth bears ;
And round their ladies’ token-gifts were set
About their helmets, flowery wreaths, still wet
With beaded dew of the scarce vanished night.
* * *
Nor could the heroes leave their fathers’ home
Unwept of damsels, who henceforth must hold
The empty air unto their bosoms cold,

And make their sweet complainings to the night
That heedeth not soft eyes and bosoms white. -

* * * * *
But on they went, and as the way they trod
His swelling heart nigh made each man a god ;
While clashed their armour to the minstrelsy
That went before them to the doubtful sea.

* * * * *
Faster they strode and faster, till a cry
Again burst from them, and right eagerly
Into swift running did they break at last,
Till all the wind-swept quay being overpast,
They pressed across the gangway, and filled up
The hollow ship as wine a golden cup."

Fine as is the above, it cannot come up to another passage, the account of the sowing of the dragon's teeth and the brood that sprang from them. The episode is one which might easily have been merely grotesque, whereas, with his masterly treatment, Morris succeeds in making it appear as though it were being really enacted before the mind's eye :

" Then Jason took the sack, and with it went
About that field new turned, and broadcast sent
The white teeth scattering, but ere he came
Back to the altar and the flickering flame,
He heard from 'neath the earth a muttered sound
That grew and grew, till all that piece of ground
Swelled into little hillocks, like as where
A stricken field was foughten, but that there
Quiet the heroes' bones lie underneath
The quivering grasses and the dusky heath ;
But now these heaps which labouring earth upthrew
About Mars' acre ever greater grew,
And still increased the noise, till none could hear
His fellow speak ; and Jason only stood
As stands the stout oak in the poplar wood
When winds are blowing. Then he saw the mounds
Bursten asunder, and the muttered sounds
Changed into loud strange shouts and warlike clang,
As with freed feet at last the earth-born sprang
On to the trembling earth, and day and light
Shone on bright arms clean ready for the fight."

The account of the slaying is concluded as follows :

" So satiate of the fight
Quickly the earth-born were, and their delight
With what it fed on perished, and one hour
Ripened the deadly fruit of that fell flower."

"The Life and Death of Jason," it has been observed, showed that the poet "had left the shadows of ballad minstrelsy and entered the pleasant sunlight of Chaucer." It "was a surprise, and was welcomed as the sustained performance of a true poet"—sustained, indeed, through upwards of ten thousand lines. No wonder, then, that it "took by storm that portion of the public which has scholarship as well as taste." The work evoked a prompt and generous tribute from Morris's brother-poet Swinburne, who, in "The Fortnightly Review" of July, 1867, after a brief reference to "The Defence of Guenevere," went on to say: "The shortcomings of this first book are nowhere traceable in the second now lying before us. A nine years' space does not lie between them in vain; enough has been learned and unlearned, rejected and attained. . . . This 'Jason' is a large and coherent poem, completed as conceived; the style throughout on a level with the invention. In direct narrative power, in clear forthright manner of procedure, not seemingly troubled to select, to pick and sift and winnow, yet never superfluous or verbose, never straggling or jarring; in these high qualities it resembles the work of Chaucer. . . . In all the noble roll of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsode comparable to the first, till the advent of this one. . . . No higher school has brought forth rarer poets than this. . . . Here is a poem sown of itself, sprung from no alien seed, cut after no alien model; fresh as wind, bright as light, full of the spring and the sun. It shares, of course, the conditions of its kind; it has no time for the subtleties, and hardly time for the ardours of tragic poetry. Passion in romance is of its nature subordinate to action. . . . Only by rare and brief jets does the poet let out the fire of a potent passion which not many others can kindle and direct. For the most part the river of romance flows on at full, but keeping well to its channel, unvexed by rains and undisturbed by whirlpools. . . . The descriptive and decorative beauties of this romance of 'Jason' are excellent above all in this, that, numberless though they be, they are always just and fit.

Not a tone of colour, not a note of form, is misplaced or dispensable. The pictures are clear and chaste, sweet and lucid as early Italian work. There are crowds and processions, battle-pieces and merry-makings, worthy of Benozzo or Carpaccio. Single figures or groups of lovers in flowery watery land, worthy of Sandro or Philipppo. The sea-pieces are like the younger Lippi's. . . . They do not taste salt or sound wide; but they have all the beauty of the beach. . . . But the root of the romance lies, of course, in the character of Medea; and here, where it was needfullest to do well, the poet has done best. At her first entrance the poem takes new life and rises out of the atmosphere of mere adventure and incident. . . . Her incantations and her flight with Jason have no less of fanciful and tender power. The fifteenth book, where she beguiles Pelias to death at the hands of his daughters, is a sample of flawless verse and noble imagination unsurpassed by any here. For dramatic invention and vivid realism of the impossible, which turns to fair and sensible truth the wildest dreams of legend, there has been no poet for centuries comparable. But the very flower and crest of this noble poem is the final tragedy at Corinth. Queen, sorceress, saviour, she has shrunk or risen to mere woman; and not in vain before entering the tragic lists has the poet called on that great poet's memory who has dealt with the terrible and pitiful passion of women like none but Shakespeare since. . . . Rarely but in the ballad and romance periods has such poetry been written, so broad and sad and simple, so full of deep and direct fire, certain of its aim, without finish, without fault. . . . The workman . . . has here approved himself a master, acceptable into the guild of great poets, on a footing of his own to be shared or disputed by no other."

Mr. Pater draws particular attention to certain aspects of the "Jason" already mentioned, viz., its "mediævalisms, delicate inconsistencies, which, coming in a poem of Greek subject, bring into this white dawn thoughts of the delirious night just over, and make one's sense of relief deeper. The opening of the fourth book of 'Jason'

describes the embarkation of the Argonauts. As in a dream the scene shifts, and we go down from Iolchos to the sea through a pageant of the Middle Age in some French or Italian town. The gilded vanes on the spires, the bells ringing in the towers, the trellis of roses at the window of the close planted with apple trees, the grotesque undercroft with its close-set pillars, change by a single touch the air of these Greek cities, and we are in Glastonbury, by the tomb of Arthur. The nymph, in furred raiment, who seduces Hylas, is conceived frankly in the spirit of Teutonic romance; her song is of a garden inclosed, such as that with which the old church glass-stainer surrounds the mystic bride of the Song of Songs. Medea herself has a hundred touches of the mediæval sorceress."

"The advent of a new poet," says Mr. Hewlett, "characterized by an unconsciousness like that of the ancient rhapsodists, and avowedly the disciple of the first English poet who most nearly resembled them, yet able to adapt his themes and his language to the demands of modern taste, was sure . . . of a hearty welcome if only on the score of novelty. On the appearance of Mr. Morris's 'Jason' he was hailed in almost every quarter as a poet who fulfilled these conditions; and the poem has deservedly taken rank among the purest of modern classics." The same writer reckons among the "salient beauties" of this poem "vivid clearness of description, choice simplicity of diction, ordered tunefulness of measure."

"In this almost entirely open-air poem," says Mr. Buxton Forman, "we follow Jason and his companions about over the world with a full, fresh, delicious sense of space and health and beauty; and we never have to think of these men as mean or low by reason of their creed or actions: they are simply big-souled adventurers, not to be daunted in their search for what the world yields of great and desirable. Mr. Morris is never more at home than when he is out of doors. He seems to revel in nature; and, full as his head must be of old lore, it is difficult to imagine when and where he has found time to acquire it, except by fits and starts in open-air ramblings, for not an elemental

trait escapes him when he gets into his landscape vein. Far too fresh are his leafy, woody, airy, sunny scenes to be conceivably the result of a second-hand study; they bear the impress of nature directly on them. . . . The poet who wrote the description of a storm in the first book of 'Jason' . . . must have studied out in the broad air, and deep in the woods, and down on the river beds, . . . open-eyed, open-eared, drinking in the beauties of prospect and sound fresh from the springs of nature. . . . All is fragrant, fresh, and instinct with originality. . . . Nearly half the materials are used in building the story up to the point whereat, through Medea's helpful love, Jason obtains the fleece; and with the other half the downward slope to his early death is symmetrically constructed. The conception of Medea is daring and powerful: the austere sorceress of the popular idea is here subdued to an exquisitely tender maiden with much strength of character; and the latent fierceness of her nature is shown in cunning touches throughout the early parts of her story. . . . We get a taste of Medea's potential fierceness when, on board Argo with the fleece, she urges the adventurers to hasten the work of running down the ship of her brother Absyrtus. This luckless prince falls by Jason's spear; and herein is one of Mr. Morris's excellent modifications: had Medea reddened her hand with a brother's blood at this point, as in the orthodox version, we must have lost interest in her; but as the tale stands we are able to regard her as a fair specimen of crafty antique womanhood, undeprived of the grace of sweet maidenliness. *Gratuitous* ferocity is no part of this conception of Medea, even when we pass from the 'Life' to the 'Death' of Jason. . . . The whole of the last book, depicting his fall from allegiance to Medea, and his fading life after her vengeance and departure, is magnificent. His mere death immediately after his treachery would scarcely have been affecting; but Mr. Morris restores him to his healthy love of great emprise and to something of his old love for Medea, and thus renders his premature death highly pathetic. Lying in the dark shadow of his beached Argo, looking across the sea, he

broods on his inactivity since the loss of Glauce; and bringing together the ruins of the past he begins to build them into the future, and to hope that Medea, hearing of new exploits, may come and seek him on his lonely throne. In this fine frame of mind he lapses into sleep—his last sleep; for as he lies the fated beam falls from Argo and crushes him with his new aspirations."

In the first edition of "The Life and Death of Jason" in 1867, the fly-leaf at the end of the volume announced as in preparation by the same author a work entitled "The Earthly Paradise," containing the following tales in verse:

Prologue—The Wanderers; or, the search for Eternal Youth.

The Story of Theseus.

The Son of Cræsus.

The Story of Cupid and Psyche.

The King's Treasure House.

The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

The Story of Pygmalion.

Atalanta's Race.

The Doom of King Acrisius.

The Story of Rhodope.

The Dolphins and the Lovers.

The Fortunes of Gyges.

The Story of Bellerophon.

The Watching of the Falcon.

The Lady of the Land.

The Hill of Venus.

The Seven Sleepers.

The Man who never Laughed again.

The Palace East of the Sun.

The Queen of the North.

The Story of Dorothea.

The Writing on the Image.

The Proud King.

The Ring given to Venus.

The Man Born to be King.

Epilogue.

In the next year, as appears from a letter from Ford

Madox Brown to Mr. Rae, dated April, 1868, Morris, while on a visit to Rossetti, finished the last of the stories for his forthcoming volume of "The Earthly Paradise," the first part of which appeared in June. It contained, beside the Prologue, which now no longer bore its subtitle, ten of the stories heralded in the original list and two fresh items, viz., "The Love of Alcestis" and "Ogier the Dane." The title of the penultimate story was changed to "Pygmalion and the Image." The table of contents for the second part, as advertised in the volume issued in 1868, was as follows :

The Story of Theseus.
The Hill of Venus.
The Story of Orpheus and Eurydice.
The Story of Dorothea.
The Fortunes of Gyges.
The Palace East of the Sun.
The Dolphins and the Lovers.
The Man who never Laughed again.
The Story of Rhodope.
Amys and Amillion.
The Story of Bellerophon.
The Ring given to Venus.
The Epilogue to the Earthly Paradise.

What further important modifications this scheme underwent may best be made clear by perusal of the list of contents of the book as it stands complete. It will then be seen that, assumed the identity of "The Palace East of the Sun" with the poem which actually appeared bearing the title "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon," only half the number of those tales that had been projected for the last part of "The Earthly Paradise" found a place in it finally. "The Story of Bellerophon," however, was expanded and divided into two separate poems, so that room was left for five new subjects instead of six. The first part of the work, originally one, was subsequently halved to form the first two volumes. The work, as it progressed, had grown so much in bulk that it was found impractic-

sunshine and virgin forest and fertile champaign, but death meets them at every step, and happiness is farthest from their grasp when the people worship them as gods and sacrifice at their shrine. Escaping from this golden thralldom they regain their ship, and after many dangers and privations are driven by the wind to an island inhabited by descendants of the ancient Greeks, who have preserved their old worship and their old freedom. Here the weary wanderers of the main are hospitably received and here they resolve to dwell in peace, forgetful of their vain search for the earthly paradise. At the beginning and the middle of every month the elders of the people and their guests meet together to while away the time with song and friendly converse. The islanders relate the traditions of their Grecian home, the mariners relate the sagas of the North, and Laurence, a Swabian priest who had joined the Norsemen in their quest, contributes the legends of Tannhäuser and of the ring given to Venus by the Roman youth. Here, then, there is full scope for the quaint beauty of romantic classicism, and for the weird glamour of the northern myth."

"Much more dramatic, I venture to think," writes Mr. Andrew Lang, "than any passage in 'Jason' is that where the dreamy seekers of Dreamland, Breton and Northman, encounter the stout King Edward III., whose kingdom is of this world. Action and fantasy are met, and the wanderers explain the nature of their quest. . . . This encounter is a passage of high invention. . . . The tale of the wanderers was Mr. Morris's own; all the rest are of the dateless heritage of our race, fairy tales coming to us, now 'softly breathed through the flutes of the Grecians,' now told by Sagamen of Iceland. The whole performance is astonishingly equable."

Although the local colour, details, and many incidents of the various tales which constitute "The Earthly Paradise" are due to the poet's creation, in no instance do the plots of the tales which he has chosen pretend to be original. It may, therefore, be useful to record the several sources from which these stories "oft-besung"

are derived; and first of "The Man Born to be King." Herr Julius Riegel, in his critical and analytical work, "Die Quellen von William Morris' Dichtung," declares that the original of this story is without doubt the legendary history of the Emperor Henry III. A somewhat similar tradition attaches to the Emperor Conrad II. Another version of the same is found in the "Gesta Romanorum," where, however, the hero is an emperor named Dolfinus; and yet again it is related of the Emperor Constantius I., surnamed Chlorus. "The Proud King" is another story from the "Gesta Romanorum." Morris gives him the name Jovinian. The story finds a close parallel in the legend of Count Robert of Sicily, as told by Longfellow. "The Writing on the Image," a tale from the "Gesta Romanorum," is also recounted by William of Malmesbury. "The Lady of the Land" is founded on the fourth chapter of "The Voiage and Travaile" of Sir John Maundevile, under the heading "Of Ypocras Daughter, transformed from a woman to a dragoun:" the "Lady of the Land" being the daughter of the famous physician Hippocrates, and the land the Isle of Cos. "The Watching of the Falcon" is taken from the thirteenth chapter of Maundevile, from the section headed "Of the Wisshinges, for Wacchinge of the Sperhawk." "Ogier the Dane," the last story in the first part of the work, may be traced to two old French poems, entitled "Chevalerie Ogier le Danois" and "Enfances Ogier le Danois;" but neither of these versions is followed so closely in Morris's poem as is the account in Tressan's "Corps d'Extraits de Romans de Chevalerie," published at Paris in 1782. The tale, which bears the long title, "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon" is remarkable as being the first story of Scandinavian origin in "The Earthly Paradise." It is the story of Gregory the Star-gazer, of the time of the Norwegian King Magnus, and has much in common with the Saga of Theodoric of Verona. The hero of the tale, who is on no account to be confounded with the Knight of the Swan or Lohengrin, may further be identified with

the Wayland Smith of popular folk-lore. "The Man who never Laughed again" is obviously taken from an Oriental source, and indeed is nearly identical with the Arabian story, translated by Jonathan Scott, of "The King, his Son, Concubine, and Seven Viziers." It embodies the root idea, which is worked out in the old romance of "Melusine," and in De la Motte Fouqué's "Undine," viz., of a mystery on the wife's part, into which, on pain of disaster and the wreck of the happiness of them both, the husband is forbidden to inquire. "The Lovers of Gudrun" is purely Icelandic, and is to be found in the "Laxdæla Saga." "The Fostering of Aslaug" is from the Saga of Ragnar Lóðbrók, and is a sort of sequel to the "Völsunga Saga." "The Ring given to Venus," from the "Gesta Regum Anglorum" of William of Malmesbury, the same *motif* employed by M. Prosper Mérimée in "Venus d'Ille," is, in its main incident, to be contrasted with the legend of St. Edmund Rich, placing a ring upon the finger of the Madonna's image in St. Mary's Church at Oxford. "The Hill of Venus" is, of course, the well-known German romance of "Tannhäuser." The remainder of the tales are taken from classical literature, "The Son of Cræsus" being related by Herodotus.

Three varieties of metre are in turn employed in "The Earthly Paradise," viz., rhymed five-foot couplets, rhymed four-foot couplets, and thirdly, *settima rima*, or the seven-line stanza of Chaucer, used in "Troilus and Criseide." In the story of "The Man who never Laughed again" occurs an exquisite song in heroic rhymed triplets, a song whose "love-laden words" are borne to the ears of the listener

"On tender music, mother of sweet tears."

And again there is a song in praise of Venus, beginning,

"Before our lady came on earth
Little there was of joy or mirth,"

in "The Hill of Venus." From the story entitled "The Golden Apples" may be extracted a stanza of superbly descriptive music:

" Amid regrets for last night, when the moon,
 Risen on the soft dusk, shone on maidens' feet,
 Brushing the gold-heart lilies to the tune
 Of pipes complaining, o'er the grass down-beat
 That mixed with dewy flowers its odours sweet,
 The shipmen laboured, till the sail unfurled
 Swung round the prow to meet another world."

And this also :

" So on they went ; the many birds sang sweet
 Through all that blossomed thicket from above,
 And unknown flowers bent down before their feet ;
 The very air, cleft by the grey-winged dove,
 Throbbled with sweet scent, and smote their souls with love."

Here, from another poem, is a graphic figure to express a ship's passage through the waters :

" The broad bows pierced the land of fishes through."

Here is a powerful metaphor of the twilight that precedes the dawn :

" Ere yet the sun
 Had slain the stars outright ;"

and here, from " The Ring given to Venus," is a picture of wasting land and encroaching sea :

" the doubtful place
 " Where the sea sucked the pasture's blood,"

portrayed more graphically by Morris in ten words than by Swinburne in so many lines, *e.g.*, in the magnificent poem, " By the North Sea," in " Studies in Song :"

" Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,
 The banks drop down into dust,
 The heights of the hills are made humble,
 As a reed's is the strength of their trust :
 As a city's that armies environ,
 The strength of their stay is of sand :
 But the grasp of the sea is as iron,
 Laid hard on the land.

A land that is thirstier than ruin ;
 A sea that is hungrier than death."

" The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon " deserves a better description than an " idle dream." It is a tale which, as Mr. Hewlett says, " is eminently charac-

teristic of the Norse imagination, and if not founded upon one of its native products, attests how thoroughly Mr. Morris had become imbued with its genius. The incidents of the narrative, especially the hero's first vision of his Fairy-love, as she dances and sings at dawn on the meadow with her sisters, holding in her hand the doffed swan-skin, which is her earthly disguise, are exquisite in their simplicity and grace." Mr. Buxton Forman is of opinion that there is no one poem in the whole collection "comparable with 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon' in point of exquisite sustained imagination and what"—the term being used to denote his qualities as the typical singer of the English tongue, "the man whose utterances are most completely and musically dis-severed from prose,"—"may be called the *Shelleyan* singing faculty." It is in this tale that there occurs the beautiful and well-known Christmas carol beginning:

"Outlanders, whence come ye last?"

with the alternate refrain:

"The snow in the street and the wind on the door;"

and

"Minstrels and maids stand forth on the floor."

In the same tale is also a very exquisite passage:

"Red roses fair
To wreath my love that wanders here,
Gold-hearted lilies for her hand!
And yet withal that she may stand
On something other folk think sweet,
March violets for her rosy feet;
The black-heart amorous poppy, fain
Death from her passing knee to gain,
Bows to the gilliflower there:
The fiery tulip stands to stare
Upon her perfect loveliness,
That 'gainst the corn-cockle will press
Its fainting leaves: further afield
The untended vine black fruit doth yield,
That bore long torment of the heat,
At last in bliss her lips to meet;
The wind-flowers wotting of the thing
Must gather round there in the spring,
And live and die and live again,

That they might feel the joyous pain
 At last, of lying crushed and rent
 Beneath her feet, while well content
 Above their soft leaves she doth sing.
 What marvel, love, that everything
 That far apart the troubled year,
 Midst toil and doubt, gives otherwhere,
 Must gather in this land round thee,
 Living and dying, still to see
 A wonder God shall not make twice."

"‘The Man Born to be King’ is" continues Mr. Hewlett, "a scarcely less admirable example of pure narrative. In the homeliness of the detail the essential life-likeness of the description consists. . . . In both these poems skilful management of the eight-syllable couplet lends an added charm to the diction. We may take, as a typical specimen, a passage from the latter, which combines these features in a single picture." The scene that follows is one which seems like a reminiscence of the poet's in Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Cherwell, or on the Thames at Iffley.

"So long he rode he drew anigh
 A mill upon the river's brim,
 That seemed a goodly place to him,
 For o'er the oily smooth mill-head
 There hung the apples growing red,
 And many an ancient apple tree
 Within the orchard could he see,
 While the smooth mill walls, white and black,
 Shook to the great wheels' measured clack,
 And grumble of the gear within ;
 While o'er the roof that dulled that din
 The doves sat crooning half the day,
 And round the half-cut stack of hay
 The sparrows fluttered twittering."

Two short but typical passages may be extracted from "Bellerophon in Argos" and "Bellerophon in Lycia" respectively :

"Thus have I sat, and cursed the God who made
 The day so long, the night so long delayed ;"

and

"Life seemed gone,
 And she had fought the Gods, and they had won."

of nature crushing his heart with remorse at the one perfidy into which he has fallen. He honestly believes that he loves Gudrun better than Kiartan does; and even in that belief he can get no solace from a marriage brought about by a betrayal of his friend, though that friend looked very like a man who meant to betray his love. The utter unsatisfaction of Bodli after he has put hope away from Gudrun's heart is finely drawn: he cannot rest away from her, and he is miserable with her. Marriage, however, appears to have been a matter of course in those days; and Gudrun's obvious line of conduct, on conviction that the noblest youth of Iceland was not, as supposed, at her disposal, was to take the man at her feet, recognised as the next noblest, and get what happiness she might from a union based on a one-sided love. But not a suspicion of joy to either man or woman arises from the partnership contracted under these sombre conditions. . . . And so matters go hideously on, until Kiartan's coming back and marrying Refna drive Gudrun frantic with sorrow at having missed the man who has really loved her, and whom she most loves; rage with the husband through whose agency the miscarriage of her happiness has chanced, and jealousy of the woman who has apparently inherited the affection once for her alone. Under Mr. Morris's treatment it is of course through no coarse and brutal enmity between his Dioscuri that the catastrophe comes about. . . . The soul which the poet has put in Bodli is far superior to the wreaking of animal hatred on his betrayed friend; and Kiartan, though a much simpler study in psychology, is no less noble than Bodli, so no more capable of low hate. . . . Kiartan, a man fitted eminently for a large, simple life of success, might never have shown greatness or smallness but for Bodli's perfidy; and when these two fine fellows are thrown into collision on the swirl of the current of Gudrun's fierce love, that would fain consume the thing loved for very hell of jealousy, each desires only to fall by the other's sword—Bodli advancing his blade to meet the parry and retort of Kiartan, and Kiartan throwing down his arms unexpectedly to take in his breast the sword of

Bodli. . . . The culminating refinement of the poet upon saga barbarism comes in the magnificent pathos of Bodli's speech over his dead rival." In short this is a masterpiece "in the extreme sense of the word:" and in the whole of "The Earthly Paradise" there is not "any one poem that approaches 'The Lovers of Gudrun' in point of breadth, depth and grandeur." But, after all, as Matthew Arnold said, the best tribute is that "which consists not in covering the poet with eloquent eulogy of our own, but in letting him, at his best and greatest, speak for himself. Surely the critic who does most for his author is the critic of him who gains readers for his author himself, not for any quotations on his author; gains more readers for him, this enables those readers to read him with more admiration." And again he says, "the characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognised by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic." One prefers, therefore, not to mar the splendours of this poem by inadequate scraps of quotations, and although it were presumptuous to suppose that anyone previously disinclined to a study of William Morris would be led thereto by a recommendation in these pages, at the same time if it should chance that there be anybody who, though at present unacquainted with the great master's poems, is willing to make trial of one, let him select "The Lovers of Gudrun," of all Morris's writings that surely which is most deserving of the description "the best tale pity ever wrought." To have introduced that sublime poem to the notice of even one only to whom it was previously unknown; and to have prevailed upon that one to share the certain joy of knowing it, were an object indeed worth the winning.

Thus much for particular stories in "The Earthly Paradise." It is now necessary to notice certain characteristics of the work in general.

Morris is peculiarly fortunate and suggestive in his choice of epithets, as, for instance, when he speaks of the "dusty" grain in a manger. Others recur so frequently

as to have become noted as mannerisms of the poet, *e.g.*, "wan" water, "dusky" swifts, and "pink-foot" doves, just as "blameless," "godlike," "pious," and the rest, are of the stock phrases of Homer and Virgil; while others again are strikingly unconventional, as when Morris describes a woman's countenance as being "pale as privet." The scenery and architecture, and in fact the general *entourage* of the Middle Ages which distinguish the "Jason," are not less conspicuous features of "The Earthly Paradise," and that not only in the romance tales, in which, of course, one would expect to find it so, but a^l in the classical tales as well. Thus one reads of C^a warriors wearing hauberks and bearing pennons,^{as} meets with chapmen, or, again, a woman carrying a ma^m, the folk dwell in bowers and sleep upon tester-beds; they stroll in pleasancess, enter precincts, and pass through posterns. In a word the associations of the days of chivalry impart an indescribable charm to "The Earthly Paradise." But its mediævalisms are not merely superficial. How thoroughly had Morris assimilated the attitude of mind of the period, its feelings and mode of expression may be gathered from two examples. The first occurs in the tale of "The Man Born to be King," in which a religious recounts how, being on his way to house^l one who lay at the point of death, although the district was but scantily populated, he yet caused the bell to be rung before him for just such a motive as would have actuated St. Francis of Assisi or the Paduan St. Antony.

"I took between mine hands the Lord,
And bade the boy bear forth the bell,
For though few folk were there to tell
Who passed that way, natheless I trow
The beasts were glad that news to know."

The other instance, from its utter unconsciousness bespeaks perhaps even more than the foregoing the poet's mediæval habit of thought. In the twenty-third stanza of "Atalanta's Race" Morris applies the epithet "shapeless" to a bear's cubs. The expression is incidental, without

further elaboration of the idea, and might easily escape observation. And yet what a jewel of ancient lore does it enshrine! The notion is older than the time of Pliny, and there is of course nothing in it that is unfamiliar to the student of mediæval bestiaries. It may not, then, be irrelevant to the subject to quote from Mr. Robert Steele's selections from the encyclopædia of Bartholomew Anglicus, to which Morris himself wrote a preface in 1893. "The bear bringeth forth a picce of flesh imperfect and evil shapen, and the mother licketh the lump, and shapeth the members with licking. . . . For the whelp is a piece of flesh little more than a mouse, having neither eyes nor ears, and having claws some-deal bourgeoning, and so this lump she licketh, and shapeth a whelp with licking." It is in such allusions as these that the unmodern tone of mind of the writer is revealed.

Morris was especially happy in his understanding and delineation of that fantastic borderland of half-dead, half-formed reliefs—that twilight phase of religion, when, on the one side, whole-hearted heathenism, as a system, had dwindled and already become discredited, and that residuum which yet survived of it, and had not lost hold on men's minds, was but the worst and lowest part of it, to wit, its superstition and its occultism; and when, on the other side, Christianity, acknowledged and accepted in its externals, had nevertheless not sunk deep enough into the conscience of the race to have effected any essential transformation of life and conduct. The passages which chiefly illustrate Morris's powerful appreciation of this dual condition of things occur in "The Hill of Venus" and in "The Ring given to Venus," which latter "contains, in the procession of the dead gods from the sea to land, perhaps the very finest thing," says Mr. Saintsbury, "that Mr. Morris has ever done." Here the two conflicting elements are blended in the person of Palumbus, who is both a Christian priest and at the same time an adept in the black arts; and find their commentary in the bitter cry of Satan, wrung from him in the anguish of his perplexity:

THE ART OF

"Shall this endure for ever, Lord?
 Hast thou no care to keep thy word?
 And must such double men abide?
 Not mine, not mine, nor on thy side?
 For as thou cursest them I curse :—
 Make their souls better, Lord, or worse."

The same thing appears once more in "The Lovers of Gudrun." The middle of this story coincides with the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, "where, though welcomed by the young, it has obtained the bare assent of the elder generation." One of the closing scenes of the tale shows Kiartan's surviving brothers and kindred gathered together round the board. The memory of the murdered man has been pledged in silence; whereupon his mother starts up, and, with a ruthless ferocity ill-becoming her venerable years, as it is inconsistent with her newly-adopted creed, strives to incite the family to avenge the blood of the slain. One glance from the widow was responded to by

"Grey Thorgerd's smile
 Scornful and fierce, who therewithal rose up
 And laid her hand upon a silver cup,
 And drew from out her cloak a jewelled sword,
 And cast it ringing on the oaken board,
 And o'er the hall's noise high her clear voice shrilled :
 'If the old gods by Christ and mass are killed
 Or driven away, yet am I left behind,
 Daughter of Egil, and with such a mind
 As Egil had, wherefore if Asa Thor
 Has never lived, and there are men no more
 Within the land, yet by this king's gift here,
 And by this cup Thor owned once, do I swear
 That the false foster-brother shall be slain
 Before three summers have come round again,
 If but my hand must bring him to his end.'"

Instances might be multiplied, but the above must suffice.

One delightful characteristic of the stories contained in "The Earthly Paradise"—a characteristic which is shared also by the "Jason," and by the later work, the "Sigurd"—is that the poet tells them, as stories of the sort should alone be told, with a childlike directness of statement that seems to disarm all doubt or question as

to the reality of the various occurrences related. The supernatural element abounds, but there is no approach to an apology for it. The course of the narrative runs on evenly and smoothly without any appreciable transition from the most matter of fact and ordinary incident to the most marvellous and extraordinary, just as though the narrator himself believed implicitly in the objective truth of everything he relates; nay, further, as though he were not conscious of making any unusual demand on the credulity of his readers. The god in the car appears and vanishes in the most natural and facile manner conceivable, without any hitch, so to speak, or creaking of the wheels of the mechanism by means of which he was introduced upon the scene.

Another point to notice is Morris's excessively delicate handling of all subjects which involve sexual relationship, subjects which, as given in the blunt language of the originals, or of the classical dictionary, scarcely seem, of their very nature, to admit of refining. Take, for instance, the well-known story of Danaë's being imprisoned by her father in a tower of brass to insure her never conceiving; and of how the craft of Acrisius was outwitted by the lust of Jupiter, who, visiting the maiden in a shower of gold, became by her the father of Perseus, the predestined destroyer of his royal grandsire. It is impossible to read Morris's account of this incident in "The Doom of King Acrisius," and not to be struck with admiration at the way in which, without slurring over, he yet succeeds in transfusing the whole matter with a chaste exaltation which banishes every trace of coarseness; or, it may be added, without being convinced of the flagrant injustice of connecting the poet's name with any faintest suspicion of "fleshliness." To anyone so minded what an opportunity offered in "The Hill of Venus" to elaborate the merely sensuous, at the expense of the ethical, side of the picture! Here, again, Morris does not take refuge in vague generalities. Yet every detail of the story goes to point the surelier to the moral that no amount of indulgence of passion can ever avail to satisfy the cravings of

the human heart. The description of the knight Walter's disillusionment is terrible in its convincing force. For a long while, indeed, his life in the Venusberg seemed to leave nothing to be desired. But this flawless enjoyment was bound sooner or later to come to an end. The time came when he began to be assailed by misgivings of he knew not what.

"Then what had happened? was the sun darker now?
Had the flowers shrunk, the warm breeze grown a-chill?"

The very vision vouchsafed him of the passionate lovers of past time—the vision that was meant to reassure him, by contrasting his present lot with theirs who had perished, that he alone enjoyed the supreme favour of the goddess, compelled him on the contrary to ask himself what guarantee he had that his life of pleasure should last if theirs had not endured. When he appealed to Venus herself with the question—

"Am I the only one
Whose eyes thy glorious kisses have made dim?
And what then with the others hast thou done?
Where is the sweetness of their sick love gone?"

the passionate cry remained unanswered. Although the goddess might stifle further questions of his lips with kisses, she could not stifle the heart-searching questions within him; until at last he could endure the torturing doubts no longer, and turned his back and fled from the Venusberg with its allurements, whose emptiness he had probed and proven, crying thus in his desperate need:

"Ah, at last
I know that no real love from me I cast;
Nought but a dream; and that God knoweth too."

Such, then, being the high tone of Morris's poetical work, a more unfounded charge than that which on the opposite score was ultimately brought against him it would be impossible to imagine, or as Mr. Hewlett puts it, "Mr. Morris's subtle delineation in 'The Hill of Venus' of the successive phases of carnal slavery and emancipation—the spiritual chaos that precedes the sudden lapse, the gradual

disenchantment, in spite of every effort to defer 'the dreadful dawn,' the long-drawn weariness of satiety, and the self-loathing sense of degradation that attends the awakening recoil—opposes as powerful a protest as any in modern poetry against the teaching of the school with which his name has been undeservedly associated."

Between the appearance of "The Defence of Guenevere" and the first instalment of "The Earthly Paradise" a space, as has been mentioned above, of ten years intervened. During that time it has been represented by several critics, while they admit his great advance in technical skill, that Mr. Morris underwent a change in mental attitude that can only be described as for the worse!

These writers contrast the vigorous, nay almost rugged, manliness of the earlier collection of poems with the brooding despondency, the abject repugnance at the prospect of death which they detect in the subsequent work. They complain that the ghastly intrusion of this sentiment, like the unwelcome presence of a skeleton at a feast, by forcing itself repeatedly upon the attention of the reader—and that too with increasing importunity, so they affirm, as the poem proceeds—in effect goes a long way to mar the beauty of the entire work. As an instance of this lamentable blemish they have singled out, among others, the song from the story of "Ogier the Dane," with its burden

"Kiss me love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?"

But the whole theory of Morris's deterioration of tone in this regard, based and built as it is on the assumption that the writing of the several poems was but little antecedent to the dates of their respective publication, is an erroneous one. The facts do not admit it, and it must fall to the ground. For, as has been shown already, not only was the particular lyric in question all but contemporary with "The Defence of Guenevere," but further, the inception of "The Earthly Paradise" itself, and the mapping out also of the poem generally, took place years

before the work was committed to the public. There simply was not time, therefore, for a radical change of conviction in William Morris, such as is alleged, to have come about. The alteration, if any, was one not of mind, but of mood. The truth is, that, with his poet's large heart and faculty of intense sympathy, Morris was capable of ranging by rapid turns from the realization of one to another of the most varied and opposite situations and phases of emotion. He was not the man, however, to allow himself to be overmastered for a length of time by any one mood, least of all by a morbid or enervating one. If he alludes frequently to the subject of death, it is as a mediæval writer might have done, for whom familiarity has robbed it of its worst terrors. It is not, indeed, to be denied that towards the latter part of the Middle Age period there were some over whom the coming Renaissance of paganism cast its grim shadows before. These were, for the most part, of exalted rank, like Charles VII. of France, for instance, and his son Louis XI., men whose craven precautions to ward off the inevitable—precautions which in the case of victorious Charles actually proved fatal to himself—became a byword of elaborate futility. But on the other hand the rank and file of Christendom, being unbeguiled by the snares of princely place and sham classical culture, from the beginning of the Gospel era down to the close of the Middle Ages, were haunted by no unwholesome nor inordinate dread of death, but faced it calmly and with fortitude. Robust, and knowing not the hypersensitiveness of these latter days, they had no occasion to resort to our vain periphrases such as "If anything should happen to me," or the like, but spoke of their end freely and quailed not. And this their spirit is little different from that which animated the author of "The Earthly Paradise," a true mediæval poet, though one born, he is constrained to own, out of his due time. No more than they did William Morris shrink from the mention of dissolution. It is only the critics of an introspective and degenerate age who have interpreted his references to death as betraying on his part a habit of cowardly terror,

that had no existence apart from their imagination. In the "Envoi" of "The Earthly Paradise" the poet does say "death have we hated;" but it is merely as a child might hate, with an innocent and perfectly natural hatred, engendered not through brooding on the dismal thought of death, but because, though he knows not what it is nor what it means, of this at least he is conscious, that it is something utterly at variance with the vigorous young life that warms and pulses through every fibre of his being. Granted that the note of "*carpe diem*" is sounded at intervals, that the desire of evading death is expressed not rarely with wistful longing and regret in the pages of "The Earthly Paradise" nevertheless it will not be found to be dominant. To have omitted such utterances altogether would have been an abandoning, if not an actual breaking, of the thread which serves to bind together the several parts of the work. As it is, it amounts merely to this, that the *motif* of the plot is sustained effectively throughout. For surely the very object of the Wanderers is to seek—is it not?—upon earth some favoured spot where, as within Eden's self, they may win means of refuge from the cares of ordinary mortals, from sickness, old age, and death; and it is no reproach therefore if this idea is not lost sight of by the poet. It occurs no more than is necessary to insure unity of purpose and cohesion to what would otherwise be a scrap-book of miscellaneous and disconnected tales. It might have been supposed, on the contrary, that no one could fail to be touched by the pathos of the situation, that as the days and months glide by, the melancholy conviction presses itself upon the Wanderers' hearts, in spite of all efforts made, all hardships endured, so far from their having reached or having any prospect of reaching, the goal of their hopes, the end from which there is no escape is but drawing surely nearer and nearer. It is not more just to pronounce this as a detriment in "The Earthly Paradise" than to say that the sense of strain and stress on the part of the fair story-teller, compelled to keep up the Khalifa's interest without abate to avoid her pending execution, spoils the "Thousand and One

Nights," or that of parrying pestilence the "Decameron."

Mr. Pater observes in the interval between the publication of "The Defence of Guenevere" on the one hand, and "The Life and Death of Jason" and "The Earthly Paradise" on the other, a "change of manners . . . wrought, . . . entire, almost a revolt"—one of the characteristics, according to his view, "of æsthetic poetry. Here there is no delirium or illusion, no experience of mere soul while the body and the bodily senses sleep, or wake with convulsed intensity at the prompting of imaginative love, but rather the great primary passions under broad daylight. . . . This simplification interests us, not merely for the sake of an individual poet—full of charm as he is—but chiefly because it explains through him a transition which, under many forms, is one law of the life of the human spirit. . . . Complex and subtle interests which the mind spins for itself may occupy art and poetry or our own spirits for a time; but sooner or later they come back with a sharp rebound to the simple elementary passions—anger, desire, regret, pity, and fear. . . . This reaction from dreamlight to daylight gives, as always happens, a strange power in dealing with morning and the things of the morning. Not less is this Hellenist of the Middle Age master of dreams, of sleep and the desire of sleep—sleep in which no one walks, restorer of childhood to men—dreams, not like Galahad's or Guenevere's, but full of happy, childish wonder as in the earlier world. It is a world in which the centaur and the ram with the fleece of gold are conceivable. The song sung always claims to be sung for the first time. There are hints at a language common to birds and beasts and men. Everywhere there is an impression of surprise, as of people first waking from the golden age, at fire, snow, wine, the touch of water as one swims, the salt taste of the sea. And this simplicity at first hand is a strange contrast to the sought-out simplicity of Wordsworth. Desire here is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it. And yet it is one of the charming anachron-

isms of a poet who, while he handles an ancient subject, never becomes an antiquarian, but animates his subject by keeping it always close to himself, that betweenwhiles we have a sense of English scenery as from an eye well practised under Wordsworth's influence, as from 'the casement half opened on summer nights' with the song of the brown bird among the willows, the

'Noise of bells, such as in moonlit lanes
Rings from the grey team on the market night.'

Nowhere out in England is there such a 'paradise of birds,' the fern-owl, the water-hen, the thrush in a hundred sweet variations, the ger-falcon, the kestrel, the starling, the pea-fowl; birds heard from the field by the townsman down in the streets at dawn; doves everywhere, pink-footed, grey-winged, flitting about the temple, troubled by the temple incense, trapped in the snow. The sea-touches are not less sharp and firm, surest of effect in places where river and sea, salt and fresh waves, conflict."

"For us the most attractive form of classical story is the monk's conception of it, when he escapes from the sombre atmosphere of his cloister to natural light. The fruits of this mood, which, divining more than it understands, infuses into the scenery and figures of Christian history some subtle reminiscence of older gods, or into the story of Cupid and Psyche that passionate stress of spirit which the world owes to Christianity, constitute a peculiar vein of interest in the art of the fifteenth century." Continuing, Mr. Pater shows (in a passage already quoted) how these remarks apply in particular to the "Jason." Still, the mediævalisms and delicate inconsistencies of the latter poem also abound in the succeeding work; and "It is precisely this effect, this grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the Middle Age, which forms the chief motive of 'The Earthly Paradise;' with an exquisite dexterity the two threads of sentiment are here interwoven and contrasted. A band of adventurers sets out from Norway, most northerly of northern lands, when the plague is raging—the bell continually ringing as they carry

the Sacrament to the sick. . . . It is below the very coast of France, through the fleet of Edward the Third, amongst the gaily-painted mediæval sails, that we pass to a reserved fragment of Greece, which by some divine good fortune lingers in the western sea into the Middle Age. There the stories of 'The Earthly Paradise' are told, Greek story and romantic alternating; and for the crew of the 'Rose Garland,' coming across the sins of the earlier world with the sign of the cross, and drinking Rhine-wine in Greece, the two worlds of sentiment are confronted. One characteristic of the pagan spirit the æsthetic poetry has, which is on its surface—the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it—the sense of death and the desire of beauty, the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death."

The first part only of "The Earthly Paradise" had appeared when Mr. John Morley, in the "Fortnightly Review," of which he was editor, expressed the grateful and refreshing sense of relief produced by this one with its absence of subjective sentiment, after the work of other contemporary poets. "Mr. Morris's central quality is a vigorous and healthy objectivity," he wrote, and "people who talk conventional cant about word-painting . . . should turn to a page of 'Jason' or 'The Earthly Paradise' and watch how the most delicious pictures are produced by the simplest and directest means."

"Mr. Morris's descriptions, condensed, simple, absolutely free from all that is strained and all that is artificial, enter the reader's mind with the direct and vivid force of impressions coming straight from the painter's canvas. There is no English poet of this time, nor perhaps of any other, who has so possessed this excellent gift of looking freshly and simply on external nature in all her many colours, and of reproducing what he sees with such effective precision and truthfulness. . . . Another of Mr. Morris's most characteristic and most delightful qualities, nearly always found in men of the healthy objective temperament, is the low-toned, crooning kindness to all the earth which

one hears through all his pléasant singing; and akin to this a certain sweet sadness as of the old time."

Ford Madox Brown wrote that "The Earthly Paradise" was full of admirable things, most of which he had heard read from the poet's own lips; while Mr. Saintsbury says that Morris, with the school to which he belonged, had "rediscovered the way to one of the Paradises of Art, . . . a true and genuine Paradise, and, to my taste, one delicious and refreshing to an extent not exceeding any other." And again the same writer says of Morris's verse, "And still, charming as are many of the detached pieces to be culled from him, the atmosphere and the tenor of the whole seem to me to be more poetical than any of the parts. All over it is that 'making the common as though it were not common,' which is the best if not the only existing definition of this indefinable quality."

Miss Amy Sharp justly remarks of the tales in "The Earthly Paradise" that "no one . . . can have the smallest difficulty in following their clear, smooth, beguiling narrative. . . . They consistently avoid all stress of heart-searching topics, and the charm of their execution is exactly what analysis kills instead of demonstrating." With reference to the language of the work Mr. Arthur Symons says that the words are always "happily chosen, . . . they have the grace of being quite the best that could happen, not that fineness which is of long search, rarity and dear buying. Certainly this was deliberate on his part; and deliberate was his use of the simplest words, which sometimes became a little cloying, and of the simplest rhythms, in which he uses few licenses, and almost never attempts an individual effect in any single line. . . . His rhymes are faint, gliding into one another stealthily; dying away, often, upon such vaguely accentuated words as 'patiently,' 'listlessly.' He aims at the effect of improvisation, and his verse becomes a sort of pathetic sing-song, like a croon, hardly ever rising or sinking in tone. With its languid, lulling monotony, its 'listless chime,' it has (especially in those heroic couplets which were finer in his hands than any other measure) the sound of a low plashing of sea-

ripples on a quiet shore, a vague and monotonous and continuous and restful going on."

"'The Earthly Paradise'" says Mr. Hewlett, "is a work of which our generation may well be proud. Whatever else may be thought of its drift it is dignified by seriousness of purpose; amid copious variety it preserves a unity of structure, and bears throughout the honourable stamp of artistic craftsmanship." "If it is sometimes voluble"—to borrow from Mr. George Saintsbury once more—"it is never prosaic; the setting-pieces, intercalated prefaces, and epilogues for the several months are, as they should be, of the very best; the poem is noble, and the general contents are sublime." One more quotation, to conclude, from Mr. Buxton Forman in "Our Living Poets:" "Putting aside the question of relative merits in the various tales, it is not too much to say that the whole 'Earthly Paradise' is such a work as cannot be found in modern literature regarded as a repertory of Aryan myth, tradition and legend. Founded almost exclusively on tales current at different epochs among nations of the great Indo-European family, this work is a more complete and homogeneous collection of the myths and traditions of that family than any one hand has yet got together and fused, by stress of individuality in the rendering, into a luxuriant and beautiful form. And when to this work is added 'The Life and Death of Jason' with its many complete episodes, Mr. Morris's unflagging energy in working at these legends, that are and always must be so dear to every Englishman, becomes a matter for no small astonishment. . . . Whatever he dreams, or whatever dream of other men he makes his own for the nonce, is rendered vivid by so much reality, so much healthiness of landscape and sky, so much truth of human interest, psychology so sterling as far as it goes, that with the easy musical flow of his rhythm and his perfectly individual simplicity of song-language, these works must be an heirloom of price for later generations as long as English poetry is read."

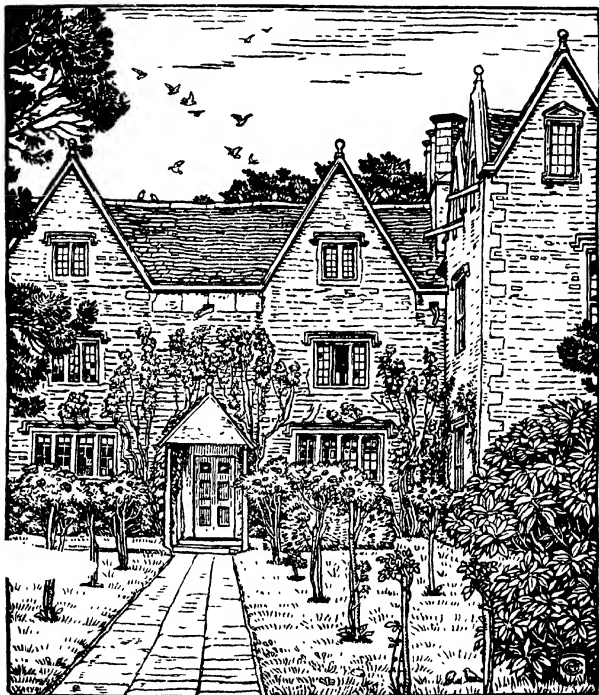
CHAPTER SEVEN: KELMSCOTT MANOR.

FOR five years from the time he left the Red House at Upton, in Kent, William Morris was without a home in the country. His friend, Rossetti, being desirous "of establishing some country quarters for work, where," so he wrote, "I can leave my belongings, and return to them as opportunity offers;" and such an arrangement as that proposed being agreeable to Morris as well, they began to look out for a suitable place to take together. They had been searching already some little time, "when this one," writes Rossetti from Kelmscott Manor, "was discovered in a house-agent's catalogue—the last place one would have expected to furnish such an out-of-the-world commodity." Out-of-the-world indeed! for in those days there was no railway station nearer than at Faringdon, a drive of seven miles. However, in 1873, a station on the Oxford and Fairford line was opened at Lechlade, a distance of between three and four miles from Kelmscott. Before the end of May, 1871, Morris had decided with Rossetti to rent Kelmscott Manor, and in less than two months' time their joint occupation was begun. Morris held the house from that time to the day of his death, a space of five-and-twenty years. He used to stay there longest in the autumn months, but at other times whenever he was overworn with too much work, or otherwise in need of a change, he had only to go down there and find the rest and refreshment that he needed. How devoted he was to the place he signalized in more ways than one. Undoubtedly he had it in his mind when he said to his audience in one of his lectures: "There may be some here who have the good luck to dwell in those noble buildings which our forefathers built, out of their very souls, one may say; such good luck I call about the greatest that can befall a man in these days."

In "News from Nowhere" Morris describes a journey up the river to Kelmscott—not his "first visit by many a time. I know these reaches well; indeed, I may say that I know every yard of the Thames from Hammersmith to

Cricklade." The teller of the tale, fancying himself in the neighbourhood of Hampton Court, says, "And as we slipped between the lovely summer greenery, I almost felt my youth come back to me, and as if I were on one of those water excursions which I used to enjoy so much in days when I was too happy to think that there could be much amiss anywhere." The visit in the romance is represented as taking place at just the year's season at which Morris first took up his abode at Kelmscott, and it may well be that he is recording here his exact impressions at the time. He dwells with tender sympathy on the description of the various river-side scenes he loved, from the "beginning of the country Thames" with its "bough-hung banks," until his arrival at the very threshold of his home—"the mowing-field; whence came waves of fragrance from the flowering clover amidst of the ripe grass. In a few minutes we had passed through a deep eddying pool into the sharp stream that ran from the ford, and beached our craft on a tiny strand of limestone gravel, and stepped ashore . . . our journey done. . . . The river came down through a wide meadow on my left, which was grey now with the ripened seeding grasses; the gleaming water was lost presently by a turn of the bank, but over the meadow I could see the mingled gables of a building where I knew the locks must be. . . . I turned a little to my right, and through the hawthorn sprays and long shoots of the wild roses could see the flat country spreading out far away under the sun of the calm evening. . . . Before me the elm boughs still hid most of what houses there might be in this river-side dwelling of men; but to the right of the cart-road a few grey buildings of the simplest kind showed here and there." It may be remarked at this point, by way of explanation, that the soil in the neighbourhood being light, the trees that flourish thereabouts are chiefly elm-trees. "Almost without my will my feet moved on along the road they knew. The raised way led us into a little field bounded by a backwater of the river on one side; on the right hand we could see a cluster of small houses and barns, new and old, and before us a grey

stone barn and a wall partly overgrown with ivy, over which a few grey gables showed. The village road ended in the shallow of the aforesaid backwater. We crossed the road, and again, almost without my will, my hand raised the latch of a door in the wall, and we stood presently on a



KELMSCOTT MANOR.

ENTRANCE FRONT.

stone path which led up to the old house. . . . The garden between the wall and the house was redolent of the June flowers, and the roses were rolling over one another with that delicious superabundance of small well-tended gardens which at first sight takes away all thought from the beholder save that of beauty. The blackbirds were singing their loudest, the doves were cooing on the roof-ridge,

the rooks in the high elm-trees beyond were garrulous among the young leaves, and the swifts wheeled whirring about the gables. And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heart of summer. . . . 'This many-gabled old house, built by the simple country-folk of the long-past times, regardless of all the turmoil that was going on in cities and courts, is lovely still.' His companion in the story then led him "close up to the house, and laid her shapely, sun-browned hand and arm on the lichened wall as if to embrace it, and cried out, 'O me! O me! How I love the earth, and the seasons, and weather, and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it—as this has done!' . . . We stood there a while by the corner of the big gable of the house. . . . We drew back a little, and looked up at the house: the door and the windows were open to the fragrant sun-cured air. . . . We went in. . . . We wandered from room to room,—from the rose-covered porch to the strange and quaint garrets amongst the great timbers of the roof, where of old time the tillers and herdsman of the manor slept. Everywhere there was but little furniture, and that only the most necessary, and of the simplest forms. The extravagant love of ornament which I had noted . . . elsewhere seemed here to have given place to the feeling that the house itself and its associations was the ornament of the country life amidst which it had been left stranded from old times, and that to re-ornament it would but take away its use as a piece of natural beauty.

"We sat down at last in a room . . . which was still hung with old tapestry, originally of no artistic value, but now faded into pleasant grey tones which harmonized thoroughly well with the quiet of the place, and which would have been ill-supplanted by brighter and more striking decoration. I . . . became . . . scarce conscious of anything, but that I was there in that old room, the doves crooning from the roofs of the barn and dovecot beyond the window opposite to me." He then noted the contrast between his living companion and "the grey



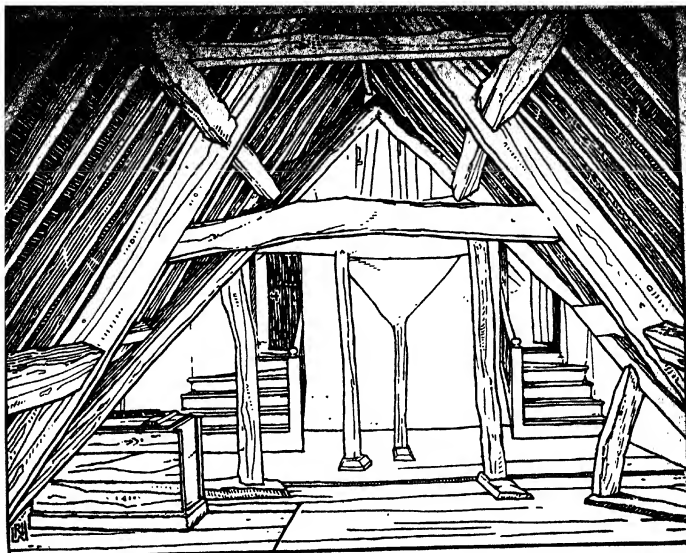
KELMSCOTT
MANOR
100

FROM THE GARTH.



KELMSCOTT MANOR

BACK OF THE HOUSE.



KELMSCOTT MANOR.

THE GARRET



KELMSCOTT MANOR.

THE TAPESTRY ROOM

faded tapestry with its futile design, which was now only bearable because it had grown so faint and feeble." Presently he goes "downstairs and out of the house into the garden by a little side door which opened out of a curious lobby." He is still in the "lovely garden," "when a little gate in the fence, which led into a small elm-shaded field, was opened" and a friend "came up the garden path, who exclaimed, 'I thought you . . . would like to see the old house. . . . Isn't it a jewel of a house after its kind?'" Such is the picture he drew of Kelmscott, and one not so much idealized but that to recognize the original of it is easy enough.

Again in an article, dated at "Kelmscott, October 25," and published in "The Quest" (Birmingham), of November, 1895, William Morris, under the title "Gossip about an old House on the Upper Thames," furnishes another account of his country home. "The village of Kelmscott," he begins, "lies close to" the river, "some five miles (by water) from the present end of the navigation at Inglesham." After a short survey of the neighbourhood, he then proceeds to describe the "mass of grey walls and pearly-grey roofs which makes the House, called by courtesy the Manor House, though it seems to have no manorial rights attached to it. . . . It lies at the very end of the village on a road which, brought up shortly by a backwater of the Thames, becomes a mere cart track leading into the meadows along the river. . . . Entering the door in . . . the high im-pointed stone wall, . . . you go up a flagged path through the front garden to the porch which is a modern but harmless addition in wood. The house from this side is a lowish three-storied one with mullioned windows (in the third these are in the gables), and at right angles to this another block whose bigger lower windows and pedimented gable lights indicate a later date. The house is built of well-laid rubble-stone of the district, the wall" in part plastered over with thin plaster. "The roofs are covered with the beautiful stone slates of the district, the most lovely covering which a roof can have, especially when, as here and in all the traditional old houses of the country-

side, they are 'sized down'; the smaller ones to the top and the bigger towards the eaves, which gives one the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish's scales or a bird's feathers. Turning round the house by



KELMSCOTT MANOR. 17TH CENTURY CARVED BEDSTEAD, WITH
NEEDLEWORK HANGINGS DESIGNED AND
WORKED BY MAY MORRIS.

the bigger block, one sees where the gable of the older and simpler part of the house once came out, and notes with pleasure the simple expression of the difference of levels in the first floor and the third floor, as by the diversity of windows and roofs: the back of the house shows nothing but the work of the earlier builders, and is

in plan of the shape of an E with the tongue cut out. . . . Standing a little aloof from the north-east angle of the building, one can get the best idea of a fact which it is essential to note, and which is found in all these old houses hereabouts, to wit, all the walls 'batter,' *i.e.*, lean a little back. . . . We must suppose that it is an example of traditional design from which the builders could not escape. To my mind it is a beauty, taking from the building a rigidity which would otherwise mar it; giving it (I can think of no other word) a flexibility which is never found in our modern imitations of the houses of this age." After a few words on the adjoining farm buildings, the dovecot, and garden, Morris continues: "Going under an arched opening in the yew hedge which makes a little garth about a low door in the middle of the north wall, one comes into a curious passage or lobby" which "leads into what was once the great parlour. . . . I have many a memory of hot summer mornings passed in its coolness amidst the green reflections of the garden. Turning back and following a little passage leading from the lobby aforesaid to the earlier part of the house" one comes, at the end of the passage, upon "a delightful little room quite low ceilinged, in the place where the house is 'thin in the wind,' so that there is a window east and a window west. . . . This room is really the heart of the Kelmscott house, having been the parlour of the old house. . . . Outside this little parlour is the entrance passage from the flagged path aforesaid, made by two stout studded partitions, the carpentry of which is very agreeable to anyone who does not want cabinet work to supplant carpentry." He then describes the upstairs part, of which the feature is the tapestry room "over the big panelled parlour. The walls of it are hung with tapestry of about 1600, representing the story of Samson: they were never great works of art, and now, when all the bright colours are faded out, and nothing is left but the indigo blues, the greys and the warm yellowy browns, they look better, I think, than they were meant to look . . . and, in spite of the designer, they give an air of romance to the room which nothing else would quite

do. Another charm this room has, that through its south window you not only catch a glimpse of the Thames clover meadows, and the pretty little elm-crowned hill over in Berkshire ; . . . you can see not only the barn . . . with its beautiful sharp gable, the grey stone sheds and the dove-cot, but also the flank of the earlier house and its little gables and grey-scaled roofs, and this is a beautiful outlook indeed." Morris does not even omit to speak of "the attics, *i.e.*, the open roof under the slates, a very sturdy beam roof of elm often unsquared ; it is most curiously divided under most of the smaller gables into little chambers where, no doubt, people, perhaps the hired field labourers, slept in old time : the bigger space is open, and is a fine place for children to play in, and has charming views east, west and north : but much of it is too curious for description. . . . The older part of the house *looks* about 1573, and the later (in this country-side) *looks* 1630 to 1640. . . . Here then," the writer concludes, "are a few words about a house that I love ; with a reasonable love I think : for though my words may give you no idea of any special charm about it, yet I assure you that the charm is there ; so much has the old house grown up out of the soil and the lives of those that lived in it ; needing no grand office-architect, . . . but some thin thread of tradition, a half-anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river ; a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common-sense, a liking for making materials serve one's turn, and perhaps, at bottom, some little grain of sentiment—this I think was what went to the making of the old house. Might we not manage to find some sympathy for all that from hence-forward !"

It was on a "memorable day," shortly after Morris and Rossetti had entered upon their joint occupancy of Kelmscott Manor, that Mr. Theodore Watts, being there at the time on a visit to Rossetti, first met Morris "and was blessed," so he writes in "The Athenæum," "with a friendship that lasted without interruption for nearly a quarter of a century." In the same paper Mr. Watts-

Dunton mentions another occasion on which himself was staying, together with the late Dr. Middleton, as guests of Morris's at Kelmscott. "The beautiful old house and the quaint, romantic chamber that served for studio, became," says Mrs. Esther Wood, "the resort of poets and artists, critics and connoisseurs, disciples and aspirants, in companies small indeed, but brilliant and memorable as any that gathered round the young Pre-Raphaelites in Newman Street, or the maturer masters of art and song that assembled in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. Mr. William Morris and his family were there frequently."

In a letter addressed to his mother from Kelmscott, a few days after his arrival there in 1871, Rossetti writes: "This house and its surroundings are the loveliest 'haunt of ancient peace' that can well be imagined—the house purely Elizabethan in character, though it may probably not be so old as that. . . . It has a quantity of farm buildings of the thatched squatted order, which look settled down into a purring state of comfort. . . . My studio here is a delightful room, all hung round with old tapestry. . . . It gives in grim sequence the history of Samson. . . . I hope you will see this lovely old place some time when it is got quite into order, and I am sure it will fill you with admiration. The garden is a perfect paradise, and the whole is built on the very banks of the Thames, along which there are beautiful walks for miles." Rossetti found the quiet of this peaceful spot particularly restful and soothing to him. He used constantly to be going there for periods of longer or shorter duration at intervals during three years. Indeed he resided there almost entirely between 1872 and 1874. He wrote much poetry and painted a certain number of pictures there. Ford Madox Brown painted a great part of his picture "Cromwell on his Farm" in the open air at Kelmscott in 1872. In the winter of that year Rossetti moved his studio to the large drawing-room on the ground floor, on account of the cold in the tapestry-room. For he had returned with Mr. George Hake to Kelmscott Manor from Scotland, whither he had gone for some while in the

autumn of 1872 for the benefit of his health. Dr. Thomas Gordon Hake visited Rossetti at Kelmscott and described the scenery of the place in his poem "Reminiscence." Rossetti left Kelmscott altogether in July, 1874; after whose withdrawal, for a period of about ten years, Mr. F. S. Ellis had a share in the place with Morris and had the right, as part occupier, to go there when it was convenient to himself to do so.



KELMSCOTT MANOR,

FROM THE MEADOW AT THE BACK.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ICELANDIC LITERATURE AND TRAVEL.

ERE the second half of "The Earthly Paradise" had taken definite shape, Mr. Morris underwent a new experience, which not only left its mark, as it has been shown, upon the book he had in hand at the time, but was destined to affect materially the whole subsequent course of his literary career. "Considered in the light of a poet and story-teller," says Mr. Buxton Forman, William Morris "may be said to have started on his career as an Anglo-Norman mediævalist, drawing, however, considerable inspiration from the Greek and Latin classics, and gradually, with a widening area of knowledge and reading, taking in at first hand influences from the sturdy literature of the Northmen who peopled Iceland."

And this is how it all happened. In the year 1868 Mr. Morris became acquainted with the Icelandic scholar, Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon. At that time the vast field of Icelandic literature was practically an unknown territory to William Morris, who, however, immediately plunged into the subject with his characteristic enthusiasm. In order to attain the utmost possible proficiency in the language, Morris entered upon the systematic study of Icelandic under the guidance of Mr. Magnússon. The first book they read together was the "Story of the Dwellers at Eyr." Master and pupil continued in close collaboration together until the withdrawal of the former in 1871, on his appointment to his present post at the University Library at Cambridge. The first-fruits of the joint labours of the two friends was the translation of "The Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue and Rafn the Skald," which appeared in the "Fortnightly Review" of January, 1869 (a "beautiful little Saga," as Mr. Forman calls it," and "a piece pervaded by an exquisite sentiment, with a far larger element of intellectual life than the 'Story of Grettir' has"); and a separate volume entitled "The Story of Grettir the Strong," published also in 1869, translated from the "Grettis Saga," "one of the most remarkable prose works of ancient Icelandic literature." "Opposite the title-page of his 'Grettis

Saga,' " writes Mr. Forman, " Mr. Morris has inscribed a beautiful and noble-spirited sonnet—the two quatrains expository of a sad-faced and tender paganism, and the terminal sestet embodying somewhat of the poet's inevitable modern refinement of idea on the same subject." The sonnet ends thus :

" Nay, with the dead I deal not ; this man lives,
And that which carried him through good and ill,
Stern against fate while his voice echoed still
From rock to rock, now he lies silent, strives
With wasting time, and through its long lapse gives
Another friend to me, life's void to fill."

" But there is no need of such evidence as this," comments Mr. Forman, " to prove the whole-hearted friendliness with which the fortunes of Grettir have been followed closely by the poet, and put into his own tongue. An almost exuberant sympathy with the hero of the saga appears and reappears in every chapter of the volume in some deftly-turned simplicity or vigorous piece of narration of vigorous proceedings. Many readers might perhaps find the story of Grettir dry. . . . The only love-passages that lend an interest to the book for such readers are in the foreign matter introduced into the saga in a late stage of its development, . . . passages, some of which are identical with passages in the romance of 'Tristram.' "

There followed, in May, 1870, " Volsunga Saga. The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs with certain Songs from the Elder Edda." Like the foregoing, this translation was the work of Messrs. Morris and Magnússon, whose aim was, as they said, to make their " rendering close and accurate, and, if it might be so, at the same time, not over prosaic." In the preface they declare that " it is to the lover of poetry and nature, rather than to the student, that we appeal to enjoy and wonder at this great work, now for the first time, strange to say, translated into English." In the process of explaining the nature of the contents of the book, the translators say, " We have inserted entire into the text as Chapter XXXI. the first lay of Gudrun, the most lyrical, the most complete, and the most beautiful of

all the Eddaic poems; a poem that any age or language might count among its most precious possessions. . . . In conclusion, we must again say how strange it seems to us that this Volsung tale, which is, in fact, an unversified poem, should never before have been translated into English. For this is the Great Story of the North, which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks." The prologue, in verse, by William Morris, consists of six seven-line stanzas, of which the concluding and most beautiful one runs as follows:

"So draw ye round and hearken, English Folk
Unto the best tale pity ever wrought!
Of how from dark to dark bright Sigurd broke,
Of Brynhild's glorious soul with love distraught,
Of Gudrun's weary wandering unto naught,
Of utter love defeated utterly,
Of Grief too strong to give Love time to die!"

Here, says Mr. Forman, the reader "will find sentiment enough and romance enough—flashes of a weird magnificence that all the ice-hills of the Land of Ice have not been able to overreach with their long dusk shadows, and that all the 'cold grey sea' that rings the island of Thule has not washed free of its colour and heat. The marvels of this marvellous story are strongly upborne by the only firm pillars art has ever had—those, namely, whose bases are fixed in the utterly real, and whose capitals reach the topmost heights of the imaginative and ideal. The science of human souls shown in the general conception of the book, and the particular conception of each character, is perfect and deep and piercing—albeit those characters do not depart from the simplicity of primitive people. . . . Sigurd Fafnir's-bane . . . is not the rough character that Grettir is: he is not behind him in readiness to kill enemies, and so on, but there is a certain courtliness about him without the dishonesty of the court, and a comeliness without the effeminacy of the polished produce of later times. Grettir is a brute, but a noble brute; Sigurd is noble, but not a brute by a long way; and yet . . . the one fierce, headstrong savage of the 'Grettis Saga' seems

to me a greater conception, artistically, than Sigurd or any other man of 'Völsunga.' As a work, however, this latter must carry the palm from its more grisly rival, for the variety's sake of its incidents and characters, and for the strength's sake of the finer feelings treated in it and ignored in the other. The one figure of the warrior-woman, Brynhild, so mere a woman for all her king-slayings and war-deeds, is priceless; and the working out of the final crash—full of passion and death and disaster—is a thing not often surpassed in any literature. . . . The Eddaic songs, translated and appended to the 'Völsunga' volume are very fine. Mr. Morris has doubtless done well to render these early poems in short irregular unrhymed stanzas, if stanzas they are to be called; and he has, without loss of ease and simplicity, given a good sprinkling of the alliterations which the Icelandic poets used for the adornment of their verse. His renderings of periphrastic expressions, too, have a peculiar excellence; and though this be the case, the finest of all the poems is peculiarly free from such expressions, probably by reason of the great earnestness of that poem's depicted sorrow, and the intense reality and simplicity of the whole scene." In short, to apply to this work in particular what has been said of his translations of the poems and tales of the Norsemen in general, it may fairly be claimed for William Morris that, by his successful renderings into our language he has "popularized in England some of the most beautiful poetry of a race with which we are closely connected by ties of ancestry and by the possession of a kindred tongue."

"The Story of Frithiof the Bold," in fifteen chapters a translation by W. Morris alone, from the Icelandic, appeared between the months of March and August, 1871, in Volume I. of "The Dark Blue." The purpose of this serial was, as it announced, to "combine the salient points of existing monthly periodicals;" and accordingly "it was determined that an appeal should be made to the members of the University of Oxford, by means of circulars, begging them to contribute to and assist this new magazine"—hence its name. It may be mentioned here that Morris's

contributions to different magazines and periodicals were numerous. Thus at this period, for instance, he contributed to "The Fortnightly Review" in August, 1868, "The God of the Poor: a Poem;" in October, 1868, "The Two Sides of the River: a Poem;" in April, 1869, "On the Edge of the Wilderness," a five-foot line poem in the form of a dialogue between Puellæ and Amans; and in February, 1871, "The Dark Wood," all of which were afterwards included in "Poems by the Way," the last-named poem appearing in that work with a new title, "Error and Loss." There were published also in "Good Words," April, 1869, a poem entitled "Hapless Love;" and in "The Academy," February 1st, 1871, four stanzas, entitled "The Seasons," reprinted in "Poems by the Way" with a variant in place of the original version of the last stanza on "Winter."

To continue the subject of translations from the Icelandic: in 1875 Messrs. Magnússon and Morris issued a volume entitled "Three Northern Love Stories, and other Tales." The contents, of which the first two items, as has been mentioned, had already appeared, are as follows:

The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue and Raven the Skald.

The Story of Frithiof the Bold.

The Story of Viglund the Fair.

The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn.

The Tale of Roi the Fool.

The Tale of Thorstein Staff-smitten.

The work was augmented with Notes and an Index.

Lastly, the two friends, Morris and Magnússon, co-operated in the preparation of the Saga Library for Mr. Bernard Quaritch. The first volume of this series, done into English out of the Icelandic, appeared in 1891, and contains:

The Story of Howard the Halt.

The Story of the Banded Men.

The Story of Hen Thorir.

The second volume appeared in 1892, and contains "The Story of the Ere Dwellers" (Eyrbyggja Saga) with "The

Story of the Heath-slayings" (Heidarvíga Saga) as appendix. These books comprise, in addition to the English rendering of the original text, prefaces, maps, genealogies, indices of persons, places, and subject matter, and copious notes of textual criticism, &c., explanations of historical allusions, of laws, customs, and superstitions, &c., and of topographical matters. Under the last head such minute detail is to be found in these volumes as indicates clearly the results of personal observation on the part of one, if not both the writers, *e.g.*, "The principal homestead in Bathdale is still Bathstead, and the farm of Blue-mere (now called Blámýrar) is still standing;" again, "At the present day people point out on the northern shore of Icefirth the ruins of a long-deserted farm called 'Howardstead.' Its site is but a few hundred 'fathoms' west of the still occupied farmhouse of Mýri . . . which again stands only a few miles west from . . . Pleasuredale, the first settler's home, and the chief farmhouse about this coast still;" again, "The immediate surroundings of the present house of Thingvellir are still thickly studded with ruins of old booths from the second 'Thorsness Thing;" again, "The valley is still called Nipsdale . . . in which two farmsteads bear the name of Nip, . . . distinguished by 'upper' and 'nether.' A name Nialstead . . . is still given to the ruins of an old crofter dwelling further up the valley;" and, lastly, the relative positions of Galmastrand and a house at Maddervales are discussed in such terms as "there is no view from it at all open towards this littoral tract," and so on, which seem to admit no manner of doubt as to the language being that of an eye-witness. With equal precision, in another place, the writers point out the impossibility of any other than such and such bights and bays being seen from a ship, being at a given position off the coast, and having "in view the mountain ranges which formed the southern and northern littoral of Broadfirth." "Mere translation," says Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, "is, of course, easy enough, but not such translation as that in the 'Saga Library.' Allowing for all the aid he" (*i.e.*, Morris) "got

from Mr. Magnússon, what a work this is! Think of the imaginative exercise required to turn the language of these saga-men into a diction so picturesque and so concrete as to make each saga an English poem; for poem each one is, if Aristotle be right in thinking that imaginative substance and not metre is the first requisite of a poem." Further volumes of the Saga Library have appeared at intervals since the second volume; the complete work, however, had not been issued at the time of Mr. Morris's death. The plan of the series comprises, in four volumes, the most important of "the histories of events foreign to Iceland," viz., "the collection of 'King-Stories,' familiarly called the *Heimskringla*."

In the summer of 1871 William Morris paid his first visit to Iceland, spending upwards of six weeks there in the months of July and August. The party of four included Mr. Magnússon and Mr. Faulkner. The first view of land that met their eyes was of three pyramidal peaks rising out of the water; and then was approached the low rocky bluff of Hjorleif's Head, an island on which was formerly a settlement of Celtic monks. A still nearer view of the mainland, topped by a ridge of glaciers in the background, disclosed green slopes streaked with black, like disused coal-pits. Morris has recorded his earliest impressions of the "fire-wrought isle" in a poem, "Iceland First Seen," in "Poems by the Way:"

"Lo, from our loitering ship
a new land at last to be seen;
Toothed rocks down the side of the firth
on the east guard a weary wide lea,
And black slope the hill-sides above,
striped adown with their desolate green:
And a peak rises up on the west
from the meeting of cloud and of sea,
Foursquare from base unto point
like the building of gods that have been,
The last of that waste of the mountains,
all cloud-wreathed and snow-flecked and grey,
And bright with the dawn that began
just now at the ending of day.

"Ah! what came we forth for to see
that our hearts are so hot with desire?

THE ART OF

Is it enough for our rest,
 the sight of this desolate strand,
 And the mountain-waste voiceless as death
 but for winds that may sleep not nor tire?
 Why do we long to wend forth
 through the length and breadth of a land,
 Dreadful with grinding of ice,
 and record of scarce hidden fire,
 But that there 'mid the grey grassy dales
 sore scarred by the running streams,
 Lives the tale of the Northland of old,
 and the undying glory of dreams?

* * * *

No wheat and no wine grows above it,
 no orchard for blossom and shade,
 The few ships that sail by its blackness
 but deem it the mouth of a grave"

The remainder of the poem is not descriptive of the scenery.

In the preface to the second volume of the Saga Library, anent "The Story of the Heath-slayings," occurs a passage where Morris describes an object which he went to see, of peculiar interest: "A remarkable popular tradition . . . lives still in the country of Hunawaler, to the effect that, after the battle of the Heath, Bardi built up the work to this day called Burg-Work, and there defended himself against the Burgfirthers, being twice attacked by them in force. . . . Whatever may be the real origin of the popular tradition, the incontestable fact remains, that once upon a time the peak-shaped fell, . . . towering to the height of some 800 feet above the level of the sea, between the two steads of Mickle-Burg . . . and Little-Burg . . . in Willowdale, was transformed by the labour of man into a military fortress. We ourselves had an opportunity of visiting the work in our trip to Iceland in 1871, and to inspect the by no means inconsiderable fortifications thrown, in the shape of walls made of large flat slabs, across all clefts in the natural basaltic rock which offered access to the top, standing over four feet thick, and in some places as many as ten feet high."

While Morris was away in Iceland Rossetti wrote to Bell Scott, to give him what news there was to give of

their common friend: "We did not expect to hear again from Morris till his return, as the steamer which took him brought the first letter we got, on its passage back, and no other steamer could come thence till the one by which he will return—I believe about the 9th or 10th. However, a few days ago a letter did come (entrusted to some Danish merchantman sailing thence) and gave a very pleasant account, though not an elaborate one. He is enjoying himself thoroughly, finds the people so hospitable (where there are any) that his party has no lack of bearable provisions, and their rides consist of a cavalcade of no less than twenty-eight horses. Tent-sleeping they do not suffer from at all, even in cold weather, as the cold is thoroughly excluded. He has seen all kinds of localities connected with the sagas. He took sketching materials, but does not say if he has used them." On September 15th, after Morris's return, Rossetti writes to Bell Scott again, saying that Morris "has kept a diary in Iceland, but not for publication." Two years later Mr. Morris went to Iceland again. On this occasion he was not accompanied by Mr. Magnússon; and the stay he made in the island was of shorter duration than the first. It was whilst on this second visit of his that Morris passed through the great central desert of Iceland with its sand, "that founders the horses," strewn with huge boulders. The fields of lava, like beds of rough clinkers, seemed to him almost trackless.

The lava, as he was interested to observe, by the way, owes its name in Icelandic to the traditional story of two unhappy bareserks, who, after bathing in a volcanic spring, were speared as they stepped out, and, slipping on a raw ox-hide, placed there for that purpose, fell back into the midst of the boiling water and thus were done to death by treachery. The violent winds that sweep over the country incessantly are another characteristic of the place. Morris noted, moreover, that there is not much vegetation in the island, but that parts of it are very beautiful, particularly where the wild swans gather. The inhabitants he found slow of speech with strangers, but great talkers once their tongues were loosed. They would sometimes refuse at first

to provide Morris and his party with accommodation, unless they had what they considered something better to offer than fish and potatoes. The tent, however, was not called much into requisition, for in the end the travellers generally were sheltered with a roof over their heads. Their means of conveyance were ponies, and often a whole company would join them and ride with them from their last halting-stage to the next, to explain to them the points of interest on the way and introduce them to other people. Not a place in the island but there was localized some event or other which was to be read of in the sagas. To find the whole population fully acquainted with the traditions of their race, and able to show the exact spot where this or that scene had been enacted, was a unique experience for Morris, and one that he prized highly. The sagas date mainly from his favourite period, the thirteenth century. But whilst he held these to be of special value, he did not overlook the importance of the later ones; nor the fact that the people went on casting their national history in this form as late as the middle of the seventeenth century, when the celebrated raiding of the country by Algerian (or, as they called them, "Turkish") freebooters occurred, the last event to be recorded in saga shape.

How deeply Morris was impressed with this astounding country, as he used to call Iceland, may be judged, for instance, from the way he wrote of it in a notice of the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1884, in which, referring to the subject of a certain picture by Mr. Peter Graham, he described it as such that "cannot but move anyone who has visited the northern latitudes; there is a sense about it of romance and interest in life amidst poverty and a narrow limit of action, and maybe of thought, which is characteristic of a poor but historic country-side, and reminds me of many a morning's awakening in a country which one may call the northern limit of history, as it is certainly one of its richest treasure houses, Iceland to wit." And again, criticising a picture of Mr. Brett's, he says, "I am not ashamed, for instance, to remind him of what a mine lies untouched in Iceland; I could tell him of places there as

wild and strange as the background of a fairy story, every rood of which has a dramatic tale hanging by it; and scenes moreover not unpaintable for a man like him, who mingles so much patience and determination with his ski." Again, in concert with Mr. Magnússon, Morris writes in the Introduction to the Saga Library: "Although Iceland is a barren northern island, of strangely wild, though to the eye that sees, beautiful scenery, the inhabitants of it neither are nor were savages cut off from the spirit and energy of the great progressive races. . . . Still more, while over the greater part of Europe at least, all knowledge of their *historical* past has faded from the memory of the people, and the last vestiges of their pre-historical memories are rapidly disappearing, in Iceland every homestead, one may almost say every field, has its well-remembered history, while the earlier folk-lore is embedded in that history, and no peasant, however poor his surroundings may be, is ignorant of the traditions of his country, or dull to them; so that a journey in Iceland to the traveller read in its ancient literature is a continual illustration, freely and eagerly offered, of the books which contain the intimate history of its ancient folk. . . . The fact that the Icelandic historians and tale-tellers were cut off from the influence of the older literature of Europe, was, we think, a piece of good luck to them rather than a misfortune. For the result was that, when the oral traditions and histories came to be written down and had to receive literary form, the writers had to create that form for themselves, and thereby escaped the meshes of the classical Latin pedantry which so grievously encumbers the mediæval literature of the rest of Europe, even in early times—a pedantry which would be unendurable if it were not that the mediæval writers misconceived it and made something else of it than was originally intended; since they saw it through the medium of feudal Christianity, and in this guise handed it down to us."

Morris's interest, however, was not confined to that merely of a student of Norse language, legend and history. His travels also enabled him to add to his experience as a

handicraftsman. For instance, he observed, as he stated in his lecture at the Health Exhibition in 1884, that the fashion of "the looms in use in Iceland and the Faroes within the last sixty years for weaving ordinary cloth, plain or chequered," was in all essentials identical with the Greek looms of 400 B.C. Again, in offering a conjectural explanation of certain textile fabrics named in edicts of St. Louis and long a subject of debate among scholars, Morris's own impression was, he said, that these materials "were like the rudely flowered stuff traditionally made by the Italian peasants to-day, in the Abruzzi, for instance. . . . This impression is chiefly founded on the fact that exactly the same make of cloth is woven in Iceland for coverlets, saddle-cloths, and the like, the inference being that it was formerly in use very widely throughout Europe."

An episode, on its own merits scarce worthy of passing mention, must yet be related, on account of the great stir it occasioned in the literary world at the time; and also on account of the protracted paper warfare of which it was the opening skirmish. Inconsistently regardless of the fact that, to use his own words, "sooner or later all literature finds its own level, whatever criticism may say or do in the matter," a certain writer thought fit to expose "The Fleshly School of Poetry" in "The Contemporary Review" of October, 1871. The article in question was signed with the *nom de guerre* of Thomas Maitland. Professedly a review of Rossetti's volume of poems, at that date some eighteen months old, it was in effect vehement attack upon Rossetti, and upon Swinburne and William Morris as well; the latter however being dealt with the most sparingly of the three. The strategic device employed by the author of the article to conceal his identity speedily led to his being discovered. For not only had Mr. Robert Buchanan, writing in the guise of a separate individual, assigned himself a prominent rank among the poets of the day—allotting them for the cast of "Hamlet," he placed his own name fourth in order, for the character of Cornelius, before Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris, on whom he bestowed respectively the parts of Osric, Rosen-

crantz, and Guildenstern—but he even went so far in advertising his own compositions as to specify those which Rossetti, so he alleged, had plagiarized. Now this, in view of the fact that the accusation he was bringing against Rossetti was, in the first place, one of immorality, and that not merely in the poet's treatment of his themes, but also in the actual subject matter, amounted to a deliberate attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the public, and deserved all that Rossetti and Swinburne could urge, by way of indignant retort, against "the stealthy school of criticism." Mr. Morris for his part did not deign to reply. And Mr. Buchanan, though professing—strangely enough, for he was undeniably the aggressor—to consider himself aggrieved in the matter, has long since withdrawn the worst of his charges. Therefore, whether or not he may have had any justification for pointing a moral in the case of Rossetti or Swinburne, is no concern here. But what shadow of pretext had he for including William Morris's name unless it was to help to adorn a much-varnished tale? In a sort of disclaimer which appeared in "The Academy" in the July following Rossetti's death Mr. Buchanan wrote: "Mr. Morris may be passed by without a word; he needs no apology of mine." Retracted or not retracted, however, the charge of fleshliness in any event should never have been brought against the poetry of William Morris. His prime offence indeed appears to have been that, with a friend's generosity, he had praised the volume of Rossetti's poems which happened to have met with Mr. Buchanan's disapproval. "The book," thus wrote Mr. Morris in "The Academy" of May 14th, 1870, "is satisfactory from end to end," and "I think these lyrics, with all their other merits, the most complete of their time; nor do I know what lyrics of any time are to be called *great* if we are to deny the title to these." Morris wrote no less enthusiastically on the appearance, some years afterwards, of Rossetti's sonnets, which he described as being "unexampled in the English language since Shakespeare's for depth of thought, and skill and felicity of execution."

As to the notices of Mr. Morris's "holiday-makings"

which had from time to time appeared in the papers, to the chagrin of Mr. Buchanan, what did they prove but that the former had already become a man of mark, and his movements matters of public interest? The subject of Mr. Buchanan's sneer was no doubt the recent journey which Morris had undertaken to Iceland, far more for the purpose of study, however, than, as Mr. Buchanan would insinuate that it was, for pleasure. Another circumstance urged to Morris's discredit was that his poetry lent itself to being copied by various writers, amongst others by Mr. John Payne in "The Masque of Shadows;" the fact of being "easily imitated" affording the "most damning proof of inferiority." But Morris had his "own great model," of whom he was in his turn "glibly imitative." Apply the same test then to Chaucer, and must not he too be convicted of "inferiority?" Nay, does Mr. Robert Buchanan himself escape who, on his own showing, was copied in so shameless a manner by Rossetti? While Mr. Morris's ability "to tell a pleasant tale" was not denied, and while it was even admitted that he was "often pure, fresh and wholesome as" Chaucer himself, at the same time Mr. Buchanan did not exempt his poetry from the ridicule involving "the fantastic figures of the fleshly school, with their droll mediæval garments, their funny archaic speech, and the fatal marks of literary consumption in every pale and delicate visage." An instance of the obstinate vitality of error is the way in which the anticipatory sentence pronounced by Robert Buchanan was repeated, just a quarter of a century later, by the fanatical prophet of the commonplace in his pseudo-scientific treatise "Degeneration." Yet neither so does their witness agree together, for William Morris is no longer branded as fleshly. On the contrary, that he "is intellectually far more healthy than Rossetti and Swinburne" Max Nordau is good enough to allow. The latter is obliged to own, caviller as he is, that "there are not many features of degeneracy" to be detected in Morris, beyond an obvious predilection for Chaucer and Dante. "Poetical ventriloquism" is the name by which the enlightened critic denotes

'this characteristic of Morris's. For the rest, "his affectation consists in mediævalism"—not a very grave indictment to bring against Morris after all; nor one, belike, which he himself would have been at great pains to repel!

After such ignoble criticisms as the above, it is gratifying to read the enthusiastic terms in which Rossetti wrote of his friend Morris in "The Academy" of February 1st, 1871: "Above all ideal personalities with which the poet must learn to identify himself, there is one supremely real which is the most imperative of all; namely, that of his reader. . . . Among the greatest English singers of the past, perhaps four only have possessed this assimilative power in pure perfection. These are Chaucer, Shakespeare, Byron and Burns; and to their names the world may probably add in the future that of William Morris." On another occasion, in a letter to Hall Caine, Rossetti said: "The dreamy romantic really hardly needs more than one vast Morris in a literature—at any rate in a century." But there is no occasion to seek further advocacy on his behalf, since Morris's work is its own best justification.

It may be a matter of some surprise that the immediate result of Morris's visit to the land of Sagas was not a work which has Iceland for scene or Northmen for actors. Pharamond, not Sigurd, was the hero who gave his name to the next poem from Morris's pen. The nature of this work is intimated in a letter of Rossetti's to Bell Scott, dated from Kelmscott, October 2nd, 1871. "Morris," he writes, "has been here twice since his return" (from Iceland), "viz., for a few days at first, and just now for a week again. He is now back in London, and this place will be empty of all inmates by the end of this week, I think. Morris has set to work with a will on a sort of masque called 'Love is Enough,' which he means to print as a moderate quarto, with woodcuts by Burne-Jones and borders by himself, some of which he has really done quite beautifully. The poem is, I think, at a higher point of execution perhaps than anything that he has done—having a passionate lyric quality such as one found in his earliest work, and of course much more balance in carrying

out. It will be a very fine work." (The writer then goes on to refer to the article in "The Contemporary Review," already noticed.) The year 1872 was not over when there appeared, antedated 1873, the poem of which the full title is "Love is Enough, or the Freeing of Pharamond. A Morality." In this work, as Mr. Gosse observes, Morris "essayed a stately analysis of certain transcendental phases of emotion." There is a deeper strain of reflection in "Love is Enough" than any part of "The Earthly Paradise" can show. An abstract of the former poem may be gathered from Mr. Hewlett's article in "The Contemporary Review," already quoted: "Pharamond, the hero, is . . . represented to us as having been in former years a pattern-knight, undaunted in adversity, unspoilt by prosperity,—a gallant soldier in the field, a wise judge on the throne. But we only see him as the slave of phantasy, haunted by dreams of an ideal love which benumb his energies and destroy his peace. Faint with the sickness of hope deferred, he deserts his people . . . and attended by one faithful follower, wanders over land and sea, enduring grievous perils, until he realizes in a lowly maiden the fair enchantress of his visions. He returns home to find his throne occupied and his people's affections estranged." But he does not wait long to bandy words with the usurper, nor to reproach his subjects for their disloyalty. "He abdicates without a pang, and cheerfully retires to love and obscurity. . . . Azalais his love . . . appears but once, to fall instantly in love with the sleeping stranger, and accept without scruple or inquiry the recognition with which he greets her on waking." The henchman Oliver's "unquestioning devotion to his master is truthfully . . . portrayed." "An abstract personage such as Love is apt to talk too metaphysically to be readily intelligible to a concrete audience." Between each scene he "appears before the curtain in an emblematic disguise;" his "ministers are supposed to chaunt the lyrical interludes that follow. . . . The universality of love's dominion is gracefully typified by exhibiting its influence over three couples of unequal rank, a newly-wedded Emperor and Empress, in

morality is played, the actor and actress who fill the leading parts, and a rustic pair selected from the throng of spectators. The simple, tender converse of the latter is full of charm." Mr. Buxton Forman is of opinion that this "dramatic and lyric morality derives the more marked features of its poetic method from the Icelandic; and it is to the second period that both this and several renderings of Icelandic sagas belong, though some of them remained in manuscript till a recent date. The period is that in which Morris shows a prevailing feeling of Northern hardiness, has abandoned the three Chaucerian stock metres, and developed a metric system with anapæstic movement surpassing in every vital particular all that has been done in anapæstic measures since Tennyson showed the way in 'Maud.'" In somewhat similar strain writes Mr. Robert Steele, who says that "'Love is Enough' . . . marks still further advance in the handling of a difficult metre and in its use of the 'tale within a tale' method. Moreover it is distinguished by its lovely lyrics, too often passed over in silence." These songs, composed in long stanzas with double rhymes, are indeed the most delightful feature of the book. Two stanzas, one out of the second, and the concluding one from the fourth interlude, may be given as typical of the style and melodious metre of the rest:

"And what do ye say then?—that Spring long departed
Has brought forth no child to the softness and showers;
—That we slept and we dreamed through the Summer of flowers;
We dreamed of the Winter, and waking dead-hearted
Found Winter upon us and waste of dull hours"

And

"Is he gone? was he with us?—ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further; come hither; for have we not found it?
Here is the House of Fulfilment of Craving;
Here is the Cup with the roses around it;
The World's Wound well healed, and the balm that hath bound it:
Cry out! for he heedeth, fair Love that led home."

It was about the time of the dissolution of the original partnership of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., in 1874, that William Morris changed his town residence



KELMSCOTT HOUSE

UPPER MALL, HAMMERSMITH

from Queen Square, Bloomsbury, to Horrington House, Chiswick, which he held until he moved, only a few years later, to No. 26 on the Upper Mall, Hammersmith. This house, which faces the river, he named, after his country home on the Upper Thames, Kelmscott House. It is said to have been occupied formerly by Dr. George Macdonald, and, earlier still, by Francis Ronalds, the electrician, who came to live there in 1816. By him were conducted some of the very first experiments in telegraphy, in the garden at the back of the house and in the sheds adjoining—the same buildings which Morris made use of for his carpet weaving, and turned subsequently into Socialist club and lecture-rooms

But to resume the subject of poetry. Morris's next departure after "Love is Enough" was again of quite a different order. "The Aeneids of Virgil. Done into English Verse" appeared in 1875 (dated 1876). Mr. Nettleship has remarked of this translation that "the number of lines in each book in the original is accurately reproduced, that the periods were ended as Virgil ended

them, and that Virgil's unfinished lines are never finished by his translator." In short it is a very close rendering. Mr. Watts-Dunton says that while giving "us an almost word-for-word translation" Morris "yet throws over the poem a glamour of romance which brings Virgil into the sympathy of the modern reader." Another writer has said of this work of Morris's that "modulated to the metre of Chapman's Homer and written largely in the Elizabethan language, it is a . . . piece of ingenious and often exquisite word-workmanship, which testifies . . . to an amazing literary dexterity;" while, according to Mr. Steele, it "was an attempt on Mr. Morris's part to express his own view of the poem. The substance of the Aeneid is a collection of folk-lore tales; and in telling them to a modern audience he wished to remove them from the 'classical' atmosphere, and to replace it by the simpler, earlier one. In this aim he has succeeded." In connection with the Virgil it is convenient, in this place, to mention "The Odyssey of Homer. Done into English Verse" by W. Morris, although this work was, in point of time, dissevered from the former altogether, and did not in fact appear until the year 1887. It is written in anapæstic couplets.

"Some competent critics are dissatisfied," writes Mr. Watts-Dunton, with Morris's translation of the Odyssey; "yet in a certain sense it is a triumph. The two specially Homeric qualities—those, indeed, which set Homer apart from all other poets—are eagerness and dignity. Never again can they be fully combined, for never again will poetry be written in the Greek hexameters and by a Homer. . . . Morris gave us a translation of the entire Odyssey, which, though it missed the Homeric dignity, secured the eagerness as completely as Chapman's free-and-easy paraphrase, and in a rendering as literal as Buckley's prose crib, which lay frankly by Morris's side as he wrote." A writer in "The Westminster Gazette" has described how he called upon Morris one day and happened to find the poet in the act of working at his version of the Odyssey, with the help of Bohn's translation. His visitor expressed astonishment, and ventured to suggest that, if Morris did

indeed consider it necessary to use a translation at all, than by Messrs. Butcher and Lang would be far more suitable. Morris replied that in the first place he was not confident enough to dispense with a translation altogether; but that at the same time he had chosen purposely the most prosaic and had avoided the one named, not wishing to let any of the phrases in it, fine as they were, run in his head and get reproduced in his own rendering. Of the two works "The Standard" says: "Previous renderings of the great books of antiquity have either endeavoured to produce the local colour of the original with as great accuracy as possible, or to transfer the thoughts of the ancient poet to modern readers by employing the diction of the generation for whom the version is intended. Mr. Morris adopted a third course. . . ." He strove "to show us the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* as seen through Scandinavian spectacles. That is . . . he gave us the poem as if it had reached him through the *Eddas* of the Viking age." A more sympathetic writer, Mr. Lang, remarks: "The reader of Mr. Morris's poetical translations has in his hands versions of almost literal closeness, and (what is extremely rare) versions of poetry by a poet."

In 1876 Mr. Morris caused to be printed for private circulation only, not for sale, three poems, viz., "The Two Sides of the River," "Hapless Love," and "The First Foray of Aristomenes." The last was a fragment, in heroic measure, of a poem never carried out, called "The Story of Aristomenes." "The Two Sides of the River" had been published, as stated, eight years, and "Hapless Love" seven years, previously. The whole work did not exceed the size of a pamphlet of some two and twenty pages.

In 1877, the following year, was published the work which Morris himself, it is said, preferred to all his other efforts in epic form, and that one of which he was proudest, viz., "The Story of Sigurd the Volsung, and the Fall of the Niblungs." This poem may almost be called a colossal work. It consists of four books, which again are subdivided into nine, ten, fifteen and seven sections respec-

vely. The names and arguments of the several books as follows:

Book I. Sigmund. In this book is told of the earlier days of the Volsungs, and of Sigmund the father of Sigurd, and of his deeds, and of how he died while Sigurd was yet unborn in his mother's womb.

Book II. Regin. Now this is the first book of the Life and Death of Sigurd the Volsung, and therein is told of the birth of him, and of his dealings with Regin the master of masters, and of his deeds in the waste places of the Earth.

Book III. Brynhild. In this book is told of the deeds of Sigurd, and of his sojourn with the Níblungs, and in the end of how he died.

Book IV. Gudrun. Herein is told of the days of the Níblungs after they slew Sigurd, and of their woeful need and fall in the House of King Atli.

This long poem is written throughout in anapæstic rhyming couplets. In "The Story of Sigurd" the flame which had burnt lowest in the "Jason," and flickered but fitfully in "The Earthly Paradise" (flaring up on such rare occasions, for example, as when Sthenobœa plays Potiphar's wife to Bellerophon's Joseph, or when again Gudrun, having lost the only man she loved, was driven frantic at the marring of her own life and Kiartan's by their two unsatisfactory marriages), broke forth afresh, rekindled into fervour,—not indeed with the same fierce, consuming fire of Guenevere's passion, but with a steady, radiant glow, communicated, as it were, from the furnace of Hind-fell. Mr. Richard Le Gallienne describes "Sigurd the Volsung" as a "splendidly forceful" poem; "a masterly version of the famous myth, and, indeed, largely derived from the 'Volsunga Saga.' To the vigour and dramatic power of the book quotation can do little justice, as its most striking effects are cumulative, as in the splendid battle descriptions, and in such a scene as the haunting death of King Gunnar. Of the strong movement of the verse, the opening lines will give some idea, though even here quotation is like bringing one wave to convey the

idea of an ocean." Nevertheless it is not possible to forbear to give these grand and sonorous lines :

"There was a dwelling of Kings ere the world was waxen old;
 Dukes were the door-wards there, and the roofs were thatched with gold;
 Earls were the wrights that wrought it, and silver nailed its doors;
 Earls' wives were the weaving-women, queens' daughters strewed its floor;
 And the masters of its song-craft were the mightiest men that cast
 The sails of the storm of battle adown the bickering blast.
 There dwelt men merry-hearted, and in hope exceeding great
 Met the good days and the evil as they went the way of fate:
 There the Gods were unforgotten, yea whiles they walked with men,
 Though e'en in that world's beginning rose a murmur now and again
 Of the midward time and the fading and the last of the latter days,
 And the entering in of the terror, and the death of the People's Praise."

Of Sigurd's magnificent speech, on his mother's disclosing to him the precious treasure stored up, "a hope of much fulfilment," to wit, "the shards of Sigmund's sword," one must be content to quote but the concluding verses :

"They have shone in the dusk and the night-time, they shall shine in the dawn and the day;
 They have gathered the storm together, they shall chase the clouds away
 They have sheared red gold asunder, they shall gleam o'er the garnere gold;
 They have ended many a story, they shall fashion a tale to be told:
 They have lived in the wrack of the people; they shall live in the glory of folk;
 They have stricken the Gods in battle, for the Gods shall they strike the stroke."

Once more, here are the words of Brynhild's invocation when first she meets with Sigurd, the opening line of which recalls another in the same poem where Morri pictures daybreak as the moment of the "sun's uprising when folks see colours again" :

"All hail, O Day and thy Sons, and thy kin of the coloured things!
 Hail, following Night, and thy Daughter that leadeth thy wavering wings
 Look down with unangry eyes on us two to-day alive,
 And give us the hearts victorious, and the gain for which we strive!
 All hail! ye Lords of God-home, and ye Queens of the House of Gold!
 Hail, thou dear Earth that bearest, and thou Wealth of field and fold!
 Give us, your noble children, the glory of wisdom and speech,
 And the hearts and the hands of healing, and the mouths and the hand that teach!"

The death-song of the noble King Gunnar, fallen into the witless power of Atli, and thrust, harp in hand, into the pit of adders and serpents, is not less majestic but too long unfortunately for quotation.

Mr. Andrew Lang has observed that "Mr. Morris took the form of the story which is most archaic, and bears most birth-marks of its savage origin—the version of the 'Völsunga,' not the German shape of the 'Nibelungenlied.' He showed extraordinary skill, especially in making human and intelligible the story of Regin, Otter, Fafnir, and the Dwarf Andvari's Hoard." It is interesting to note the different points of view in the several treatments of the myth—a comparison which is worked out somewhat fully by Dr. Francis Hueffer, as follows: "Of the two modern versions of the tale which are most thoroughly inspired by the ancient myth, one, that of Wagner in his tetralogy 'Der Ring des Nibelungen,' is dramatic in form, the other, Morris's 'The Story of Sigurd the Volsung,' bears all the characteristics of the epic. To this difference of artistic aim, the difference of shape which the tale takes in the hands of the two poets may be traced. In one point, however, they agree. Both Wagner and Morris go back to the old Icelandic sources in preference to the mediæval German version of the tale embodied in the 'Nibelungenlied.' From this the German poet borrows little more than the localization of his drama on the banks of the river Rhine, the English poet scarcely anything but his metre—the *langzeile* or long line with six high-toned and any number of unaccentuated syllables. The ordinary modern reader taking up the 'Völsunga Saga' or either of the Eddas without preparation would probably see in them little more than a confused accumulation of impossible adventures and deeds of prowess, with an admixture of incest, fratricide, and other horrors. But on looking closer one discovers a certain plan in this entanglement. . . ." To "the modern poet who is courageous enough to grapple with such a subject, two ways are open. . . . Either he may wholly abandon the sequence of the old tale and group its *disiecta membra* round a

leading idea as a centre, or else he may adhere to the order and essence of the legend as originally told, or emphasizing such points as are essential to the significance of the story, and omitting or throwing into comparative shade those incidents which by their nature betray themselves to be arbitrary additions of later date. Wagner has chosen the former way, Morris the latter. This fact and the divergent requirements of the drama and the epic, sufficiently account for their difference of treatment. . . . With an astounding grasp of detail, and with a continuity of thought rarely equalled, Wagner has re-moulded the confused and complex argument of the old tale, omitting what seemed unnecessary, and placing in juxtaposition incidents organically connected but separated by the obtuseness of later saga-men. Morris, as has been said before, proceeds on a different principle. His first object is to tell a tale, and to tell it as nearly as possible in the spirit and according to the letter of the old Sagas. In this he has succeeded in a manner at once indicative of his high poetic gifts and of a deep sympathy with the spirit of the Northern myth, which breathes in every line and in every turn of his phraseology."

"It is the influence of the Northern sagas," says Mr Arthur Symonds, "which took possession of Morris as the took possession of Wagner, both having passed through a period of complete absorption in the knightly and romantic Middle Ages; and both, at the last, going back to the primitive antiquity of legend, and of Northern legend. With Morris we feel that certain energies, latent in the material from the first, and, indeed, compressed within certain limits by the exercise of a most energetic will, have at last been allowed free play. The simple, artificial English of the earlier books gives place to a new, and in a sense not less artificial style, returning upon earlier English models, and forging for itself monosyllabic words which are themselves energies. In 'The Story of Sigurd,' which remains his masterpiece of sustained power, he goes sheer through civilization, and finds an ampler beauty shadowed under the dusk of the gods. He gets a larger style, a style more

pted in the earth, more vivid with the impulse of nature; and the beauty of his writing is now a grave beauty, from which all mere prettiness is clean consumed away. And now, at last, he touches the heart; for he sings of the passions of men, of the fierceness of love and hate, of the music of swords in the day of battle. And still, more than ever, he is the poet of beauty; for he has realized that in beauty there is something more elemental than smiling lips, or the soft dropping of tears."

A wider significance in "The Story of Sigurd" has been perceived by some writers, like Mr. A. L. Lilley, for example, who discourses thus in "The Commonwealth:": "Morris found the definite inspiration of his song in Teutonic legend, in the gigantic primeval world of Scandinavian myth. To it we owe his greatest work, the 'Sigurd,' and that cycle of half-prose, half-verse romances which his death left incomplete. Nothing can better illustrate the essential unlikeness of Morris to his age than a comparison of the way in which he treated this legendary material with that in which it has been treated by Wagner and Ibsen. On the one hand is the wild incalculableness of life, its destructive rage and wrath bursting forth inevitably and unaccountably from its centres of sanest and deepest feeling. On the other is life well in hand, a great ordered body of feeling and purpose, moving, with struggle and effort, indeed, but with certainty too, and self-control, to its appointed end, and that an end of assured justice and good. . . . For Morris 'Sigurd' is . . . the protagonist of right, of a true social order. Whatever shadows may rest upon his soul, the battles have to be fought and won, the struggle against external wrong must go on continually, 'for the hope of the days to be.' Morris found in the Teutonic ideal of tribe-fellowship, of the subordination of the individual life to the age-long life of the House, or of the Kindred, all the elements of a reasonable joy and purpose and satisfaction for the individual life itself. Within the limits of a true social order he believed with his whole soul that there lay the elements of all that is essentially individual—of art, of morals, of religion."

The above view of the matter may or may not be justified; for how is it possible to be quite certain as to what unconscious influences may have been at work in the poet's mind at the time of his writing "The Story of Sigurd?" But that, even had they been present, Morris would willingly have allowed them—one cannot say to obtrude themselves, for that is out of the question, but even so much as to modify his treatment of the theme in any way, is not probable. If indeed he did so it was quite an exceptional case. And why, it may be argued, should he have chosen so indirect a means of saying what he could have said, nay, often did say, when occasion was, in direct and forthright fashion? It seems, then, far more in keeping with his taste and general custom to suppose that his purpose was simply to tell a pleasant tale in the pleasantest manner possible. Be that as it may, however, there is no doubt as to the extraordinary genius of the man who could write a poem so scholarly and so beautiful as this. "Think of the forces at work," writes Mr. Watts-Dunton, "in producing a poem like 'Sigurd.' Think of the mingling of the drudgery of the dryasdust with the movements of an imaginative vision unsurpassed in our time; think, I say, of the collaborating of the 'Völsunga Saga' with the 'Nibelungenlied,' the choosing of this point from the saga-man, and of that point from the later poem of the Germans, and then fusing the whole by imaginative heat into the greatest epic of the nineteenth century. Was there not work enough here for a considerable portion of a poet's life?" In fine, "The Story of Sigurd the Volsung" is such that, for those high qualities, as Mr. Forman observes, "which derive from knowledge of life, feeling for national myth, epic action and tragic intensity combined, . . . stands among the foremost poems not only of this century but of our literature."

CHAPTER NINE: THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

THOSE persons who had been in the habit of complaining that they found the subjects of William Morris's pen—his "Guenevere," "Jason," "Earthly Paradise," "Love is Enough," and "Sigurd," his translations of the *Æneid* and Norse Sagas, of merely literary and archæological interest; too much belonging to an unreal land of dreams and legend; or, if not mythological, at any rate too far away in scene and circumstance to apply to their needs and be of practical help in the present, were destined before long to receive a surprise, it may be said a shock, in some of his later poems, and in most of his later prose writings. "A serious generation," so we were told, "found something wanting in 'the idle singer of an empty day;'" they wanted more body in their poetry—more 'criticism of life'—a more courageous endeavour to stand up to the problems of the age and make the best of them, instead of fleeing for refuge into fairyland." They experienced from reading "The Earthly Paradise" the drowsy sensations of "lotus eating." They felt themselves aggrieved at "the constant effort to detach poetry from modern life and connect it with a past age of romance." They reproached the poet that he shrank from grappling with the questions of the day; yet it may be doubted whether, when Mr. Morris did come forward to express his views on a matter of public concern, his critics were satisfied. Anyhow, he vindicated himself once and for all from the charge of indifference to contemporary affairs. It was in the autumn of the year 1876. Through the length and breadth of Europe an outburst of indignation had followed the notorious Bulgarian atrocities; and more particularly in this country the demand for redress had rung forth clamant, peremptory. It seemed as though the misgovernment of the Turk really was going to be put a stop to once and for all. Time glided by, however, and nothing was done; when at the end of a few weeks a reaction set in and dominant opinion seemed unaccountably to have veered round, so that there was actually a likelihood

of England, under the Tory ministry, being driven to take up arms on the side of Turkey. Then it was that Mr. Morris addressed a letter, dated October 24th, to "The Daily News," under the heading "England and the Turks." Had we gone to the help of the victims of the Turks, Mr. Morris would have rejoiced, he said, "in such a war, and thought it wholly good. . . . I should have thought I had lived for something at last: to have seen all England just and in earnest, . . . and our country honoured throughout all the world." But, on the contrary, as things were, after three weeks he found England, to his sorrow, "mocked throughout all the world." The many resolutions that had but recently been passed calling for the punishment of the Turkish "thieves and murderers" had proved mere empty words; while the rumour in the air to the effect that England was going to war on behalf of the Turks filled Mr. Morris with consternation, and impelled him to protest in the most formal and forcible way he could. "I who am writing this," he said, "am one of a large class of men—quiet men, who usually go about their own business, heeding public matters less than they ought, and afraid to speak in such a huge concourse as the English nation, however much they may feel, but who are now stung into bitterness by thinking how helpless they are in a public matter that touches them so closely." Such a war as threatened was a monstrous shame, a disaster, a curse. Of so "cynically unjust" a proceeding Morris was convinced that "nothing could come . . . but shame in defeat, shame in victory." "I appeal," he said, "to the working men, and pray them to look to it that if this shame falls upon them they will certainly remember it and be burdened by it when their day clears for them, and they attain all, and more than all, they now are striving for." And in conclusion, "I beg with humility to be allowed to inscribe myself, in the company of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Freeman, and all men that I esteem, as an hysterical sentimentalist,"—for such, after all, was the worst taunt with which their opponents knew how to reproach them. The whole letter is astonishingly modern and apposite to present circumstances. In fact,

ith the alteration of certain names of persons and places, reads as if it had been written but yesterday.

Mr. Morris again had occasion to come before the public under somewhat similar circumstances at the beginning of 1878. At that time, it will be remembered, there seemed imminent prospect of England being dragged into the Russo-Turkish struggle, in active support of the Ottoman cause. The sentiment of this country was divided on the subject, and party feeling was strong on either side. Various meetings were held in different parts to discuss the situation. In London, on January 16th, two meetings were held to advocate the preservation of neutrality by the nation in respect of Eastern affairs. The first meeting took place in the afternoon at Willis's Rooms. It was organized by the committee to promote the free navigation of the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, the Hon. and Rev. W. H. Fremantle in the chair. William Morris was present, and delivered a speech in which he pronounced the Turks to be, in his opinion, irreformable (prophetic words which have received the saddest confirmation in the recent massacres of Armenians in Constantinople and in the East—events fresh in everybody's memory), denounced the "war at any price" party, and concluded by insisting that "the country ought to offer the most earnest resistance to schemes that were a disgrace to the names of peace, goodwill, and justice."

In the evening of the same day another meeting with the same objects was convened at Exeter Hall by the Eastern Question Association and the Workmen's Neutrality Committee, Morris being present on this occasion also. In the early part of the proceedings was read from the platform a song, in five stanzas of eight lines each, commencing "Wake, London lads," written by William Morris in support of the intention of the meeting. A copy of these verses, printed on a broadside for distribution, had been placed in the hands of every person entering the hall, so that, when they were sung by the choir to the tune of "The Hardy Norseman's Home of Yore," a large

number of the audience took part in the singing. Mr. Mundella, M.P., was in the chair, and at the close Mr. Morris seconded the vote of thanks to him for presiding. The platform tickets for this Neutrality Demonstration bore a vignette designed by Burne-Jones, entitled "Blind War." As they would have of course to be given up by all who availed themselves of them, specimens of the ticket must now be exceedingly rare. Mr. Fairfax Murray, however, has a copy both of the platform ticket and of the broadside, bound up in a volume of pamphlets collected by the late William Bell Scott, bearing on the Eastern Question.

From this time forward, except the translation of the *Odyssey* in 1887, already mentioned, Morris published no volume of poetry until the appearance of "Poems by the Way," in 1891; neither, until the same year (1891), which witnessed also the first issue of the *Saga Library*, had he published any more translations from the Icelandic since the appearance of "Three Northern Love Stories" in 1875. The contrast is very striking between the prolific output of poetry in his earlier years, *i.e.*, from 1858 to 1877, during which time six important works (including "The Earthly Paradise," itself equivalent to four) appeared, and the later period, from 1878 to his death in 1896, during which he published but two poetical works, or three, if the verse translation of "L'Ordene de Chevalerie," comprised, under the title of "The Ordination of Knighthood," together with "The Order of Chivalry," in one volume, in 1893, be counted.

It would seem almost as though there were few middle courses open for a poet to choose between the two extreme alternatives of his art on the one hand, and the world of living humankind on the other. Of the class who are absolutely unconcerned with anything beyond their own art, Keats may be taken as an example, in whose poetry hardly a single allusion to contemporary affairs is to be found; Keats whose imagination was lulled into a sort of charmed sleep, out of which all his life through he never waked to any of the sterner realities of daily existence. There is the poet, on the contrary, who, at starting, is keenly alive

to the problems of his day; ay, he whose gift of foresight is so much more penetrating than that of the vast mass of his contemporaries that it enables him to anticipate far ahead of them all—so far, indeed, that he becomes himself unpractical. Such a man was Byron, who, born aristocrat though he was, did not hesitate to utter sentiments that were counter to all the hereditary prejudices of his class, and could not fail to estrange and isolate him. "The king-times," he wrote, "are fast finishing; there will be blood shed like water and tears like must, but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it." A political career being impossible for him under these circumstances, he threw himself, as Matthew Arnold points out, upon poetry as his organ, and from his advanced position turned deliberately, in all a pessimist's despair of the present, to excess and luxury, for distraction. Morris avoided either of these courses, as also he was wise enough to avoid another error of an opposite kind, viz., the poet's who, striving to be the prophet of his age, and to proclaim his message through the medium of his poetry, misses the point at which he has aimed, and, becoming overwhelmed in a maze of tortuous emotions, only succeeds in providing intellectual conundrums for learned Browning societies to wrangle over. With Morris it was altogether different. Arriving at last, through a process the reverse of Byron's, that is, through poetry and the arts, face to face with the tremendous study of modern life, he yet kept his poetry as far as possible disengaged from the entangling mesh of social and political problems, and at the time when these came uppermost in his mind he practically abandoned poetry. Hence the disproportionate quantity produced in his later years. Hence also the fact that such poems as he did produce were all of them shorter pieces; his perfect sense of the fitness of things showing him the incompatibility of heroic poetry with any modern theme. For a nineteenth century epic is assuredly a contradiction in terms. "An epic poem on a historical subject," as the "Edinburgh Review" rightly says, "is a form of composition which the ex-

perience of poets and the progress of criticism seem to have condemned. It is difficult to imagine an epic written now upon the Peninsular or the Crimean War. As civilization advances the poet is driven to deal with purely imaginative stories, or with legends of a remote past. Information becomes more accessible, and men become more sensitive to inaccuracies in matters of fact. How could a poet re-cast the Crimean War so as to give it anything of the poetic shape of the Wars of Thebes or Troy? He would meet with insuperable obstacles both in style and subject. How could he prevent his language from becoming at times irredeemably prosaic? . . . The true material for an epic would seem to be, not recent fact, but the remote memories of a people's past, glorified and shaped by the imagination of successive generations, or the artistic efforts of successive minstrels." The age of skald and bard, mouthpieces and inspirers of the people, is now passed away. Much as one may regret it, one has to face the fact that at the present day the oracle of the masses finds its chosen mode of utterance in the prose of the newspaper; and that poetry—good poetry—is not the language that suits them. The only kind that does appeal to them is the doggerel recited on the stage of the music-hall. But to such depths of laurelled degradation it was of course inconceivable that Morris could ever have suffered himself to sink.

But unmodern in theme and mould as was William Morris's poetical work, it is not to be denied that, at an early date in his career, he betrayed symptoms of unrest and dissatisfaction with our existing condition of things. Thus an examination of "The Earthly Paradise" will disclose tokens of a conflict, as it were, going on in the poet's mind between his art and his politics, either striving for the mastery. Mr. Oscar Triggs, indeed, professes to trace a logical and continuous development of ideas in Morris from the beginning, and to show that both his later and earlier writings harmonize and interpenetrate. "The poet's Socialism," writes the American critic, "grew out of his love of art, which inflamed him with a desire to

bring all men within its domain, while the 'Earthly Paradise' reveals a man who chose to live before he wrote. He invites us to

'Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town ;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green ;'

and shows us Chaucer's London that he may recover for us the conditions of life which made possible the peculiar spring-tide quality of Chaucer's poems. And before he wrote he repeated for himself the principles of living, only from which pure art can spring. The latter work announces the prophecy implied in the former." "Just consider," said Morris in an address to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, "the immeasurable difference between the surroundings of the workmen of the present day and the workmen of the fourteenth century. Consider London of the fourteenth century—a smallish town, beautiful from one end to the other ; streets of low whitewashed houses, with a big Gothic church standing in the middle of it ; a town surrounded by walls, with a forest of church towers and spires, besides the cathedral and the abbeys and priories ; every one of the houses in it, nay, every shed, bearing in it a certain amount of absolute, definite, distinct, conscientious art. Think of the difference between that and the London of to-day, whose houses either have no attempt at ornament or architecture about them, or, where they have ornament, make us regret that there is such a thing ; and at least where art exists, it is paid for by the foot, and only comes in as part of the conditions of contract which rules all society among us ; whereas in the old town the ornament grew spontaneously out of the method of work. The modern conditions of labour were not known in the old time. Yet even this difference between the towns in the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries does not express the difference which exists between the workmen of the two ages. It

is far greater than that. Just consider what England was in the fourteenth century. The population, rather doubtful, but I suppose you may take it at about four millions. Think then of the amount of beautiful and dignified buildings which those four millions built; of whom there were, of course, the regular proportion of women, children, and idlers. As we go from parish to parish in England we see in each a church which is, or at all events has been, beautiful, and in every town we see important and sometimes huge and most elaborate buildings, the very sight of which fills us with a kind of awe at the patience and skill which produced them. But further, we have to consider not only those churches and houses which we see, but also those which have been destroyed, and all those other beautiful abbey buildings, *e.g.*, of which only a few relics have been left, and of which Cobbett truly says that at the time of the Reformation England must have looked like a country which had been subject to a cruel invasion. Those buildings also, though they contained little upholstery contained much art: pictures, metal work, carvings, tapestry, and the like, altogether forming a prodigious mass of art, produced by a scanty population. Try to imagine that. Why, if we were asked, supposing we had the capacity, to reproduce the whole of those buildings with their contents, we should have to reply, 'The country is not rich enough—every capitalist in the country would be ruined before it could be done.' Is not that strange? Surely there must be some reason for that." And so the more Morris pondered on these things, the more wide and accurate his knowledge of history and of the literature and art of the Middle Ages became, the more thoroughly was he persuaded that "the art of that time was the outcome of the life of that time," and the more was he struck by the terrible contrast presented by the life of the workmen of the past and the life of the workmen of to-day, and the more profound grew his sense of dissatisfaction with the present conditions of society. But to go back again some twenty years, it is in "The Life and Death of Jason," perhaps the last place where one would look to find it,—

so remote is the classic legend both in scene and subject from the life of our own day—that the first note of discontent is sounded. Apostrophizing therein his master Chaucer, Morris refers to ourselves as being “meshed within this smoky net of unrejoicing labour.” On the other hand, in the Prologue to “The Earthly Paradise,” published a year later, he seems to repudiate, as being but a “dreamer of dreams,” the care and responsibility of taking part in measures of reform “Why should I strive,” he asks, “to set the crooked straight?” and in protest asseverates that he is only “the idle singer of an empty day.” For the issue was undecided; was perhaps even undefined as yet. But the mere fact of the poet reasoning on the matter at all shows that the idea of setting the crooked straight *had* already presented itself to him, in some form or other, as a possible duty to be undertaken, and that the rival claims had ere now begun to contend within him. “His mood changed from ‘The Earthly Paradise,’” writes Mr. Walter Crane, “though even there, in the opening verses, the very fact that he seemed conscious of the turmoil and trouble of the world outside would indicate what afterwards happened—that he would finally be compelled to listen to it, to form an opinion, and take his part in the great industrial battle. That he did not hesitate on which side, or with whom, to cast his lot, is not to be wondered at when one considers the thoroughness of his nature.”

Abundant indications of revolutionary tendency are to be found in the body of the poem. Thus, in “Bellerophon in Argos,” there occurs the stirring injunction :

“Yea, and bethink thee, mayst thou not be born
To raise the crushed and succour the forlorn,
And in the place of sorrow to set mirth,
Gaining a great name through the wondering earth?”

If the high purpose here set forth may not be pronounced as necessarily Socialistic, at any rate the author's views with regard to the injustice of privileged class government are definite and unmistakable. Take, for instance, another passage from the last-quoted poem :

THE ART OF

"Do thou bide at home,
 And let the king hear what may even come
 To a king's ears ; meddle thou not, nor make
 With any such ; still shall the brass pot break
 The earthen pot—a lord is thanked for what
 A poor man often has in prison sat."

In another passage he says :

"Some smiled doubtfully
 For thinking how few men escape the yoke
 From this or that man's hand, and how most folk
 Must needs be kings and slaves the while they live,
 And take from this man, and to that man give
 Things hard enow :"

in another :

"Like the wise ants, a kingless, happy folk
 We long have been, not galled by any yoke."

And in another :

"Ever must the rich man hate the poor."

At the end of the tale of "The Proud King" the writer bursts forth :

"But ye, O kings, think all that ye have got
 To be but gawds cast out upon some heap,
 And stolen while the Master was asleep."

And once again he gives vent to his indignation as follows:

"Many-peopled earth !
 In foolish anger and in foolish mirth,
 In causeless wars that never had an aim,
 In worshipping the kings that bring thee shame,
 In spreading lies that hide wrath in their breast,
 In breaking up the short-lived days of rest,—
 In all thy folk care nought for, how they cling
 Each unto each, fostering the foolish thing,
 Nought worth, grown out of nought, that lightly lies
 'Twixt throat and lips, and yet works miseries !"

And here he expresses his yearning desire for the realization of his ideal :

"Ah ! good and ill,
 When will your strife the fated measure fill ?
 When will the tangled veil be drawn away
 To show us all that unimagined day ?"

A section of Morris's admirers would have preferred to

have him engaged incessantly and exclusively in active propaganda of Socialism. If the truth must be told, his having written poetry at all is an awkward fact, and one of which they are rather ashamed. In the eyes of these people every moment Morris gave to art and letters was so much wasted time that needs apology, that can be justified only on the plea that it was the recreation he allowed himself as a relief from the arduous strain of political agitation. But this is a poor compliment to pay their hero. It is practically an assertion that in the vast amount of poetry and prose romance he produced he was not in earnest! Was ever trifling so elaborate and so sustained known before? No; it will not do. Morris's poetry was neither the plaything to which he resorted for pastime, nor the narcotic by which he induced oblivion. As long as he was able to do so with a free conscience he devoted himself to poetry heart and soul. But there was that spirit latent within him which was bound to assert itself sooner or later; that spirit which, when he at first became conscious of it, maybe he would fain have repressed, but such that nevertheless was destined to become the ascendant and in effect the controlling force of his life. The first intimations of its presence occur in the "Jason," as has been shown above; it makes itself felt more manifestly and more persistently in the "Earthly Paradise." To all seeming dormant (or is it stifled by effort?) in "Love is Enough" and in "Sigurd," it breaks forth imperious thereafter, never again to be subordinated, but to become ever more and more paramount as the poet's years increased.

The die had long since been cast, long since the choice of paths made irrevocably, when, in 1891, Morris published his "Poems by the Way." The collection ranged over a long period—included, in fact, all the best of the shorter poems that Morris had written since "The Defence of Guenevere." Of these a considerable number had already been published in magazines and papers, viz., beside those named already, the poem called "Of the Three Seekers," in "To-Day," January, 1884; "Meeting in Winter," in

Macmillan's "English Illustrated Magazine," March, 1884; "The Hall and the Wood," in the same of February, 1890; and "The Day of Days," in "Time," November, 1890. The last should be included among the Socialist poems, like "The Message of the March Wind," "Mother and Son," "The Voice of Toil," "The Day is Coming," and "All for the Cause," which had previously made their appearance in political journals or pamphlets. There were also certain verses for pictures by Burne-Jones, *e.g.*, the four stanzas for "The Briar Rose" series of paintings, exhibited at Messrs. Thomas Agnew and Sons' in 1890; and others for tapestry, *e.g.*, "The Woodpecker," "Pomona," "Flora," and "The Orchard." But not the least notable feature in "Poems by the Way" was a series of ballads translated from the Icelandic and the Danish, and a certain further number of original ballads inspired by them. In the poem "Mother and Son," according to "The Academy," "the piece that is perhaps the strongest Mr. Morris has written, . . . there are strokes with a fearless ring that reminds one strongly of Rossetti's 'Jenny;' and the whole volume, indeed, not only betokens a splendid vitality of gift . . . but recalls at every turn that its author is one of a famous 'fraternity . . . who have been animated, despite all their differences, by a certain common spirit, and endowed with a similar cunning in the craft of song." "In none of his previous works," says another writer, "does Mr. Morris show an eye and a hand so sure as here;" and "in all that is noble in temper and beautiful in art this volume could hardly be surpassed, even by the poet or 'Sigurd.' . . . Howsoever rapturously the poet may delight in the rich and wonderful world in which he finds himself, the moment he stays to reflect, the moment he stays to ask himself what it all means, there comes upon him that high seriousness, that 'sad earnestness,' which is the foundation of the great poetry of Hellas. . . . Although in Mr. Morris's case the high poetic temper does not wane, but, on the contrary, waxes with years, its expression is mellower now." The work, representing, as it does, manifold phases of thought and emotion, certainly

ould not be charged with aloofness from human interests, the characteristic which, as it has been shown, many had deplored in Morris's earlier poems. The song, once languorous, it was remarked, now "vibrates oftener;" the former "faint voices . . . have begun to speak in more human tones." A writer in "The Academy" recognizes in "Poems by the Way," "a passion for equal justice, a sympathy with outcast classes, and a vision of coming redress," as imparting to this work a strength and substance which could not be claimed for Morris's work in the days of "The Earthly Paradise." Again, "another influence . . . that of the old Norse life and literature . . . just like that of Socialism, is certainly one that has given additional vigour and glory to the poet's verse."

CHAPTER TEN: LECTURES, ARTICLES, AND OPINIONS.

FROM the year 1878 to the last year of his life Morris became more and more prominent as a lecturer and writer on all sorts of subjects connected with the arts; and that not merely in respect of their technical processes, in which he was an adept, but in the social and economical bearings of the question. With him, indeed, were not to be dissociated the two aspects, the political gaining ever greater importance in his eyes, and becoming even more predominant in his writings and public utterances as time advanced. The amount of brain-work entailed in the preparation of so many lectures, articles, &c., as are enumerated below—and the following cannot pretend to be an exhaustive list of Morris's labours in this field—is enormous, and such that cannot easily be estimated.

In 1878 Morris delivered an address before the Trades' Guild of Learning, entitled "The Decorative Arts, their Relation to Modern Life and Progress." In the same year the lecture was issued in pamphlet form with its original title, but when it came out again in 1882 in the volume "Hopes and Fears for Art: Five Lectures delivered in Birmingham, London, and Nottingham, 1878-1881," its title was changed to "The Lesser Arts." The above-named volume comprised "The Art of the People," delivered before the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design in the Town Hall at Birmingham on February 19th, 1879, and "The Beauty of Life," a lecture delivered exactly a year later, to the very day, before the same Society by Mr. Morris in his new capacity of President. (This lecture was first published in Birmingham in 1880 under its original title of "Pleasure *versus* Labour and Sorrow.") The two concluding items in "Hopes and Fears for Art" are "Making the Best of it," a paper read before the Trades' Guild of Learning and the Birmingham Society of Artists; and "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization," delivered at the London Institution. Two more lectures by Morris, entitled respectively "The History of Pattern Designing," and

"The Lesser Arts of Life," were published in 1882. The volume in which these last-named lectures appeared has a preface by Morris's friend, Professor Middleton, in conjunction with whom he wrote for the ninth edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" (Edinburgh, 1884), an article on the subject of "Mural Decoration."

Prior to this, on November 14th, 1883, at a meeting organized by the Russell Club at Oxford, Morris delivered a lecture on "Art under Plutocracy" in the hall of University College. Professor Ruskin, with whom, long as they had been acquainted, Morris never came much into personal contact, was present on the high-table dais to support the lecturer on this occasion, and in a short speech referred to Morris as "a great conceiver, a great workman, at once a poet and an artist." He urged the necessity of union, and called upon the young men to help in giving the best direction to the "great forces which, like an evil aurora, were lighting the world, and thus to bring about the peace which passeth understanding." In concluding the lecture, in which he had denounced the modern industrial and economical system, Morris said, "It is my business here to-night and everywhere to foster your discontent," and, as a practical step, advised his audience to marry, as it would be called, "beneath" them in order to break down the existing social barriers between class and class. Fancy that in a College Hall! It was not to be expected that the Reverend Master, with the responsibilities of office upon him, could sit and listen quietly to such counsels being given to undergraduates in his very presence; accordingly Mr. Franck Bright rose up, and in the most emphatic manner protested that the College Hall had not been lent for any such purpose. The lecture was published in the February and March numbers of the magazine "To-Day," 1884. On January 23rd, 1884, Morris delivered, before the Secular Society of Leicester, a lecture on "Art and Socialism," afterwards published at Leek. In the above-named magazine, "To-Day," in July, 1884, appeared a notice of "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy" of the current year "by a rare visitor"—for so

Morris described himself. In this article the writer states that the aims of a painter should be briefly :

- 1st. Expression of Imagination ;
- 2nd. Decorative Beauty ;
- 3rd. Realization of Nature ;
- 4th. Skill of Execution.

"Success," he says, "in any of the three first of these aims, *together with the last*, will give a picture existence as a work of art." Morris further observes that the way the Chantrey Bequest is administered is "the sort of thing which gets the Academy the bad name it has got, and makes it perhaps the most contemptible public body in England—which is saying much." At the International Health Exhibition Mr. Morris delivered, on July 11th, 1884, a lecture on "Textile Fabrics," afterwards published for the executive Council of the Exhibition, and the Council of the Society of Arts. On September 14th, 1884, he lectured at Sheffield on "Iceland and its Ancient Literature and History." In 1887 Morris published a pamphlet "The Aims of Art," a lecture incorporated with six others more or less political and economical, in "Signs of Change" (1888). To "The Fortnightly Review" of May, 1888, he contributed an article on "The Revival of Architecture," and to the same periodical in November an article on "The Revival of Handicraft," in which he discussed the probabilities of hand-workmanship recovering the place usurped from it by machinery as a means of production. On November 1st in the same year, at the New Gallery, he lectured on "Tapestry and Carpet Weaving," one of a series of lectures organized by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.

Morris wrote for "The Nineteenth Century" of March, 1889, a paper on "Westminster Abbey and its Monuments," in which he said, "we may call" the Abbey Church "the most beautiful of all English buildings, and unsurpassed in beauty by any building in the world ;" and again, "Placed in the centre of the shabbiest, ugliest, and most ridiculous capital in the world, with London squalor on the one hand, and London eclectic fatuity and sham on the other, it upholds for us the standard of art or the

pleasure of life, contrasted with dirt and its degradation, beyond all other buildings." In another place he says, on the same subject, "We live in the middle of this world of brick and mortar, and there is little else left us amidst it, except the ghost of the great church at Westminster, ruined as its exterior is by the stupidity of the restoring architect, and insulted as its glorious interior is by the pompous undertaker's lies, by the vainglory and ignorance of the last two centuries and a half—little besides that and the matchless Hall near it;" and again elsewhere he describes Henry VII.'s chapel as a "most romantic work of the late Middle Ages," rendered, however, as to its exterior, little more than "an office study" by Wyatt's disastrous rebuilding. The article in "The Nineteenth Century" was occasioned by Mr. Shaw-Lefevre's scheme for erecting a memorial chapel for further interments and monuments, for which the available room in the Abbey Church is rapidly becoming exhausted. Criticizing the existing monuments, Morris divided them into two categories, viz., those which do, and those which do not "harmonize" with the architecture of the church. Disfiguring as the official undertakers' monuments are, they have at least fulfilled a good end, not contemplated by those who erected them, to wit, they have saved the walls they cover from the hand of the "restorer." But as to the memorials of more recent times, "the busts produced by modern sculpture are not quite congruous with the architecture of people who knew how to carve." Mr. Morris insists then, as of absolute necessity, that "no more monuments of any kind should be placed in the Abbey Church, on any pretext whatever." In the matter of the proposed mortuary annexe, as Morris observes elsewhere, "the welfare of the noblest building ever raised by Englishmen ought to be the first thing considered." His passionate admiration for the ancient abbey increased as years went by. Thus, in the year previous to his death, writing to "The Times" to protest against the "restoration" of the royal tombs, Morris said that it would amount to nothing short of a "national disaster,"

if any such scheme were to be carried out amid "the loveliness of the most beautiful building in Europe."

On November 7th, 1889, Morris gave a lecture at the New Gallery on "Gothic Architecture," a work well known as having been printed by the Kelmscott Press in the autumn of 1893. In January, 1890, an article by Morris appeared in "Time," the new series, under the editorship of Mr. E. Belfort Bax, with a wrapper designed by Walter Crane. The article, which is entitled "Art and Industry in the Fourteenth Century," opens with a glowing description of the great church of Peterborough, for which the writer had an enthusiastic affection, and goes on to give an account of the life and industrial condition of mediæval England. "The Socialist Ideal of Art" was published in "The New Review" of January, 1891. On October 2nd of that year Morris gave an address, "On the Collection of Paintings of the English Pre-Raphaelite School," in the Museum and Art Gallery at Birmingham, an address which was at once an exposition of the principles of the movement, and a summary of its history.

A paper read by Morris before the Art Workers' Guild, and afterwards published in "The Century Guild Hobby Horse" of January, 1892, on "The Influence of Building Materials upon Architecture," defines architecture as "the art of building suitably with suitable material." "Nothing," he said, "is more likely to lead to a really living style,"—"a desideratum which everybody is seeking for,"—"than the consideration, first of all . . . of the suitable use of material." Comparing the various materials available, Morris pronounced stone to be definitely the most noble and the most satisfactory; wood the next, and brick a makeshift only, in default of a better material. For London, however, and large towns generally, neither Kentish rag nor Bath stone is suitable; the first because its rough surface gathers dirt in a very short space of time, and Bath stone because it becomes destroyed by the action of the sulphuric acid it absorbs from the atmosphere. Where bricks are used they should be as long and as narrow as possible in shape. As to terra-cotta "I cannot

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abide it, I must say," remarked Morris. On principle objected to the fatal ease with which terra-cotta lends itself to the imitation of carved work. "I think it is very much better if you want to have brick ornament on a building to get cut and rubbed work." As a matter of ornamenting wall surfaces on the inside of a building "marble is the most difficult material to use it is possible to conceive. I do not know how it is," said Morris, "but unless it is used with the utmost skill, a skill which must be—to be successful—the result of many centuries of tradition—unless it be so used, the marble, even in the inside, does decidedly vulgarize the building, however beautiful it may be in itself." Considering next the materials for roofing purposes, Morris remarked that Welsh slates were the object of his particular aversion, so much so that he would like to close all Welsh slate quarries. In the case of Edinburgh, he remarked, uninteresting a set of buildings as they are which form its big squares, they derive a kind of pleasantness and dignity which they would not otherwise possess, from the fact of their being covered with something better than ordinary slate. Morris, indeed, records the sense of relief he felt on waking in the northern capital and looking out of the window upon the array of roofs below, to find that they were not slated. For roofs, he says, the good materials, in order of merit, are "first lead . . . then stone slates, then tiles, then thatch, and lastly, when you can use it, oak shingle. The bad materials, which nobody ought to use, on pain of not being considered an architect at all, are thin slates and Broseley tiles." As regards the choice of a style for building, it is of course essential to take some period when the art of architecture "really had roots in it, and was not all in the air. Starting with that, and attending to the absolute needs of the people who want houses built, and . . . with the real solid and genuine use of the material, you would at least get a style" which, if it did not succeed in producing beautiful buildings, would at any rate produce such that would not be ridiculous in the eyes of future generations. It is moreover desirable, said Morris, to get rid of the nicely executed

drawing of the office. The draughtsmanship of the architects of ancient buildings was not particularly splendid nor complete. For most of the beautiful buildings throughout the country nothing, in fact, beyond the roughest draught was prepared. "They . . . grew up simply, without any intermediary between the mind and the hands of the people who actually built them." And the chief reason was that the builders of those days "were traditionally acquainted with the best means of using the material, which, happily for them, they were forced to use—the materials that were all round about them in the fields and woods amidst which they passed their lives."

On January 26th, 1892, Morris read before the Society of Arts a paper, afterwards published, with illustrations, in the *Journal of the Society*, on "The Woodcuts of Gothic Books." In recognition of this service he received, at the end of the session 1891-92, the Society's silver medal.

On February 15th, 1892, Morris wrote for the Kelm-scott edition of Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic" a special preface. Herein he says that, to his mind, this chapter of "The Stones of Venice" "is one of the most important things written by the author, and in future days will be considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century. . . . For the lesson that Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it; and lastly, that unless man's work once again become a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain, and therefore live in pain. So that the result of the thousands of years of man's effort on earth must be general unhappiness and universal degradation. . . . If this be true, as I for one most firmly believe, it follows that the hallowing of labour by art is the one aim for us at the present day. . . . But for this aim of at last gain-

ing happiness through our daily and necessary labour, the time is short enough, the need . . . urgent. . . . And we may well admire and love the man who here called the attention of English-speaking people to this momentous subject, and that with such directness and clearness of insight that his words could not be disregarded." Ruskin was not indeed the first man who "put forward the possibility and the urgent necessity that men should take pleasure in Labour. . . . But in their times neither Owen nor Fourier could possibly have found the key to the problem with which Ruskin was provided," to wit, "the element of sensuous pleasure, which is the essence of all true art. Nevertheless, it must be said that Fourier and Ruskin were touched by the same instinct, and it is instructive and hopeful to note how they arrived at the same point by such very different roads." To Morris the most characteristic side of Ruskin's writings is the ethical and political part of them—elements which, from the time of his writing "The Nature of Gothic," have "never been absent from his criticisms of art; and, in my opinion," says Morris, "it is just this part of his work fairly begun in the" chapter above-named "and brought to its culmination in that great book, 'Unto this Last,' which has had the most enduring and beneficent effect on his contemporaries, and will have, through them, on succeeding generations." In a word, "John Ruskin has done serious and solid work towards the new birth of society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of mankind."

"The address to the President and Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects," says "The Saturday Review," "to protest against the proposal to make the practice of architecture a closed profession, bears amongst other names that of William Morris. It is printed at the end of the Preface, p. xxxiv, to a collection of essays on the subject, entitled 'Architecture, a Profession or an Art,' published by Mr. Murray in 1892."

In 1893 was published "Medieval Lore: an Epitome

of the Science, Geography, Animal and Plant Folk-Lore and Myth of the Middle Age : being Classified Gleanings from the Encyclopedia of Bartholomew Anglicus on the Properties of Things," edited by Robert Steele, with a preface by William Morris. The latter is particularly interesting, as it sets forth the position with regard to mediæval studies. "It is not long since the Middle Ages . . . were supposed to be an unaccountable phenomenon accidentally thrust in betwixt the two periods of civilization, the classical and the modern, and forming a period without growth or meaning, a period which began about the time of the decay of the Roman Empire, and ended suddenly, and more or less unaccountably, at the time of the Reformation. The society of this period was supposed to be lawless and chaotic; its ethics a mere conscious hypocrisy; its art gloomy and barbarous fanaticism only; its literature the formless jargon of savages; and as to its science, that side of human intelligence was supposed to be an invention of the time when the Middle Ages had been dead two hundred years. The light which the researches of modern historians, archæologists, bibliographers and others have let in on our view of the Middle Ages has dispersed the cloud of ignorance on this subject. . . . For many years there had been a growing reaction against the dull 'gray' narrowness of the last century. . . . At last the study of facts by men who were neither artistic nor sentimental came to the help of that first glimmer of instinct, and gradually something like a true insight into the life of the Middle Ages was gained. . . . The men of those times are no longer puzzles to us; we can understand their aspirations, and sympathize with their lives, while at the same time we have no wish (not to say hope) to put back the clock, and start from the position which they held. For, indeed, it is characteristic of the times in which we live, that whereas in the beginning of the romantic reaction, its supporters were, for the most part, mere *laudatores temporis acti*, at the present time those who take pleasure in studying the life of the Middle Ages are more commonly to be found in the ranks of

those who are pledged to the forward movement of modern life." In another place Morris speaks to the same effect: "I will be bold to say that many of the best men among us look back much to the past, not with idle regret, but with humility, hope, and courage; not in striving to bring the dead to life again, but to enrich the present and the future." But to return to the preface to "Medieval Lore." "The reader before he can enjoy . . . what was once a famous knowledge-book of the Middle Ages," says Morris, "must cast away the exploded theory of the invincible and wilful ignorance of the days when it was written; the people of that time were eagerly desirous for knowledge, and their teachers were mostly single-hearted and intelligent men, of a diligence and laboriousness almost past belief. This 'Properties of Things' of Bartholomew the Englishman is but one of the huge encyclopedias written in the early Middle Ages for the instruction of those who wished to learn, and the reputation of it and its fellows shows how much the science of the day was appreciated by the public at large, how many there were who wished to learn. . . . It is a hopeful sign of the times when students of science find themselves drawn towards the historical aspect of the world of men, and show that their minds have been enlarged and not narrowed by their special studies, a defect which was too apt to mar the qualities of the seekers into natural facts in what must now, I would hope, be called the just-passed epoch of intelligence, dominated by Whig politics, and the self-sufficiency of empirical science." Elsewhere Morris speaks of "the great period of genuine creation" which was "once called the Dark Ages by those who had forgotten the past, and whose ideal of the future was a comfortable prison." Morris held that if those ages are dark it is only because our own blindness makes them so to us, and to speak of them as dark, therefore, is but a confession of ignorance on our own side. "The part which they played in the course of history was not only necessary to the development of the life of the world, but was so special and characteristic that it will leave its mark

on future ages in spite of the ignorant contemplation of them, from which we are slowly emerging."

Once more on this subject Morris says: "The past art of what has grown to be civilized Europe from the time of the decline of the ancient classical peoples, was the outcome of instinct working on an unbroken chain of tradition: it was . . . human and fruitful ever: many a man it solaced, many a slave in body it freed in soul; boundless pleasure it gave to those who wrought it and those who used it: long and long it lived . . . while it kept but little record of its best and noblest; for least of all things could it abide to make for itself kings and tyrants: every man's hand and soul it used, the lowest as the highest, and in its bosom at least were all free men: it did its work, not creating an art more perfect than itself, but . . . freedom of thought and speech, and the longing for light and knowledge, and the coming days that should slay it: and so at last it died in the hour of its highest hope, almost before the greatest men that came of it had passed away from the world. It is dead now; no longing will bring it back to us; no echo of it is left among the peoples whom it once made happy."

On June 19th, 1893, Morris read a paper on "The Ideal Book" before the Bibliographical Society in Hanover Square, a paper afterwards published among the Society's Transactions of the year. In July, 1893, Morris wrote a preface to the collection of "Arts and Crafts Essays," published in one volume in 1893. Herein he sets forth "the way in which it seems to me we ought to face the present position of" the "revival in decorative art. . . . And in the . . . first place, the very fact that there is a 'revival' shows that the arts aforesaid have been sick unto death. . . . The position which we have to face then is this: the lack of beauty in modern life (of decoration in the best sense of the word), which in the earlier part of the century was unnoticed, is now recognized by a part of the public as an evil to be remedied if possible; but by far the larger part of civilized mankind does not feel the lack in the least, so that no general sense of beauty is extant

which would *force* us into the creation of a feeling for art which in its turn would *force* us into taking up the dropped links of tradition, and once more producing genuine organic art. Such art as we have is not the work of the mass of crafts-men unconscious of any definite style, but producing beauty instinctively. . . . Our art is the work of a small minority, composed of educated persons, fully conscious of their aim of producing beauty, and distinguished from the great body of workmen by the possession of that aim." Elsewhere Morris observed: "The workman of to-day is not an artist as his forefather was, . . . it is the hope of my life that this may one day be changed, that popular art may grow again in our midst; that we may have an architectural style, the growth of its own times, but connected with all history." Again he says, "the line of traditions is broken." It takes a thousand years in a straight line to produce a traditional style, and "we have nothing like a stream of inspiration to carry us on. The age is ugly—to find anything beautiful we must 'look before and after.' . . . No, if a man nowadays wants to do anything beautiful he must just choose the epoch which suits him and identify himself with that—he must be a thirteenth century man, for instance." And yet again he says: "Whatever there is of "the art of our own day "that is worth considering is eclectic," for "the present century has no school of art but such as each man of talent or genius makes for himself to serve his craving for the expression of his thought while he is alive, and to perish with his death." In many other places Morris insisted on the impossibility of any art flourishing which was the exclusive possession of the so-called cultivated classes only. "The truth is . . . the laboured education of a few will not raise even those few above the reach of the evils that beset the great mass of the population: the brutality, of which such a huge stock has been accumulated lower down, will often show, without much peeling, through the selfish refinement of those who have let it accumulate." Again: "The reflex of the grinding trouble of those who toil to live that they may live to toil weighs upon them also, and

forbids them to look upon art as a matter of importance they know it but as a toy, not as a serious help to life. . . . They think that as labour is now organized art can go indefinitely as *it* is now organized, practised by a few, adding a little interest, a little refinement to the lives of those who have come to look upon intellectual interest and spiritual refinement as their birthright. No, no, it can never be." "We cannot have art by striving after its superficial manifestation." But to return to the Preface of the "Arts and Crafts Essays;" Morris goes on to say he does not "ignore the fact that there is a school of artists belonging to this decade who set forth that beauty is not an essential part of art; which they consider rather as an instrument for the statement of fact, or an exhibition of the artist's intellectual observation and skill of hand. . . . The modern 'Impressionists' loudly proclaim their enmity to beauty, and are no more unconscious of their aim than the artists of the revival are of their longing to link themselves to the traditional art of the past. Here we have then, on the one hand, a school which is pushing rather than drifting into the domain of the empirical science of to-day, and another which can only work through its observation of an art which was once organic, but which died centuries ago, leaving us what by this time has become but the wreckage of its brilliant and eager life, while at the same time the great mass of civilization lives on content to forgo art almost altogether. . . . Now it seems to me that this impulse in men of certain minds and moods towards certain forms of art, this genuine eclecticism, is all that we can expect under modern civilization; that we can expect no *general* impulse towards the fine arts till civilization has been transformed into some other condition of life, the details of which we cannot foresee. Let us then make the best of it, and admit that those who practise art must nowadays be conscious of that practice. . . . But having made the admission let us accept the consequences of it, and understand that it is our business as artists, since we desire to produce works of art, to supply the lack of tradition by diligently cultivating in ourselves the sense

of beauty, . . . skill of hand, and niceness of observation, without which only a *makeshift* of art can be got." Morris's contributions to the book consist of essays on "Textiles," "Printing," and "Of Dyeing as an Art." These three papers had already appeared in the several catalogues of the exhibitions of the Society; two of them in the same form in which they were republished, while the third, the essay on "Printing," was a paper which, in its original form, had been issued in the name of Emery Walker alone. It was afterwards recast entirely, and in its new state, with important additions, it now appeared in the names of William Morris and Emery Walker together.

In August, 1893, was completed the Kelmscott Press reprint of the "Utopia," with a "Foreword" written specially for this edition by William Morris. The work, he says, is one which embodies "the curious fancies of a great writer and thinker of the period of the Renaissance." In another place Morris calls him "the representative of the nobler hopes of his day." But to resume: "The change of ideas concerning the best state of a 'publique weale,' which, I will venture to say, is the great event of the end of this century, has thrown a fresh light upon the book; so that now to some it seems . . . (in its essence) a prediction of a state of society which will be." He then goes on to point out the value of the work as a historic link in the study of sociology, connecting, as it does, the surviving communist tradition of the Middle Ages with "the hopeful and practical progressive movement of to-day. . . . The action of the period of transition from mediæval to commercial society with all its brutalities, was before his" (More's) "eyes; and though he was not alone in his time in condemning the injustice and cruelty of the revolution which destroyed the peasant life in England, and turned it into a grazing farm for the moneyed gentry; creating withal at one stroke the propertyless wage-earner and the masterless vagrant (*hodie* 'pauper'), yet he saw deeper into its root-causes than any other man of his own day. . . . The spirit of the Renaissance, itself the intellectual side of the very movement which he strove against, was strong in him; . . .

supplanted in him the chivalry feeling of the age just passing away. To him war is no longer a delight of the well born, but rather an ugly necessity. . . . Hunting and hawking are no longer the choice pleasures of knight and lady, but are jeered at by him as foolish and unreasonable pieces of butchery: his pleasures are in the main the reasonable ones of learning and music. . . . In More . . . are met together the man instinctively sympathetic with the communistic side of mediæval society; the protester against the ugly brutality of the earliest period of commercialism; the enthusiast of the Renaissance, ever looking toward his idealized ancient society as the type and example of all really intelligent life; the man tinged with the asceticism at once of the classical philosopher and of the monk. . . . These qualities and excellences meet to produce a steady expression of the longing for a society of equality of condition; a society in which the individual man can scarcely conceive of his existence apart from the commonwealth of which he forms a portion. This . . . is the essence of his book. . . . Though doubtless it was the pressure of circumstances in his own days that made More what he was, yet that pressure forced him to give us . . . a picture (his own, indeed, not ours) of the real New Birth, which many men before him had desired; and which now indeed we may well hope is drawing near to realization, though after such a long series of events which at the time of their happening seemed to nullify his hopes completely."

On November 2nd, 1893, Morris lectured at the New Gallery "On the Printing of Books;" and to the January number of Messrs. Cassell and Co.'s "Magazine of Art" in 1894, contributed a paper entitled "Some Notes on the Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages," in which he remarked that illumination is "an art which may be called peculiar to the Middle Ages, and which commonly shows mediæval craftsmanship at its best." He then sketches the progress of the art from its earliest days down to its disappearance in 1530.

At the South London Art Gallery on January 14th,

1894, Mr. Morris delivered an address on "Early England," in which he gave a graphic and interesting sketch of the fortunes of this island and its occupiers in the earliest historic times. Hammersmith, his home, was situated, he remarked, in the Hundred of Ossulton, a name which survived, although the site of that place, which might have dated from the successors of the Romans in Britain, could not be determined at the present day. Morris spoke in high terms of Ethelwulf's son, King Alfred the Great (to whom he refers elsewhere as "the only decent official that England ever had"). "No other man of genius," he said, "sat on the throne of England save Cromwell, who was mourned more during life by his friends than at death, and after all Alfred was the one man of genius who ever held that position in this country." Nothing could be more romantic than the history of Harold the Hapless, and he (Morris) could only regret that no native pen had reserved for us such a narrative of that fatal battle of enlac as would have proceeded from an Icelandic source.

In September, 1894, Morris wrote an introductory note to an edition of Dr. J. M. Neale's carol of "Good King Wenceslas," pictured by Mr. A. J. Gaskin, of the Birmingham School. In this note Morris observes that Dr. Neale was a representative of a certain aspect of the party movement to which he belonged, an aspect "which, unless I am mistaken, has almost died out as a special characteristic of Ritualism—the historical side, to wit. This has happened, I think, because of the growth amongst thinking people generally of a sense of the importance of mediæval history, and of the increasing knowledge that the ecclesiastical part of it cannot be dissociated from its civil and popular parts. Mediæval history, in all its detail, with all its enthusiasms, legends and superstitions, is now cultivated by many who have no ecclesiastical bias, as a portion of the great progress of the life of man on the earth, the discovery of which as an unbroken chain belongs almost entirely to our own days."

In the first volume of "Bibliographica" (1895), appeared a paper by W. Morris "On the Artistic Qualities of the

Woodcut Books of Ulm and Augsburg in the Fifteenth Century." Morris here declares that his own choice among books of the school rests with the work of an Ulm printer, John Zainer, viz., "*Boccaccio De Claris Mulieribus*" (1473), and that "partly because it is a very old friend of mine, and perhaps the first book that gave me a clear insight into the essential qualities of the mediæval design of that period." The qualities, or rather the merits, in question are two, and comprise what is essential in all picture books, viz., firstly, decorative beauty; and, secondly, the telling a story. The decorative quality is produced in these books unconsciously, that is to say, it is the accidental product of the skilful workman, whose skill is largely the result of tradition, so that it "has become a habit of the hand to him to work in a decorative manner. . . . The subject-matter of the book also makes it one of the most interesting, giving it opportunity for setting forth the mediæval reverence for the classical period, without any of the loss of romance on the one hand, and epical sincerity and directness on the other, which the flood-tide of Renaissance rhetoric presently inflicted on the world. . . . The great initial S I claim to be one of the very best printers' ornaments ever made."

On December 14th, 1895, in the Bolt Court School, Fleet Street, Morris delivered a lecture, organized by the London County Council, on the subject of "Early Illustration." He commenced the lecture with an attractive sketch of the evolution of the art. Organic work in the way of illustration had, he said, two qualities, viz., the ornamental and the epical; that is, the quality of telling a story with the interest of incident. This latter quality, however, after a short life of about fifty years only from its beginning, was displaced by the rhetorical, which did not tell a story but took hold of all sorts of minor incidents that had nothing to do with it. The art of illustrating books with woodcuts was apparently of German origin, the best work of early days having been carried out in that country. The lecturer concluded by exhibiting a series of lantern slides representing various woodcuts of the fifteenth

and early sixteenth centuries, beginning with the work of Germany, and passing thence to that of France, Italy, and Spain.

The recognition that William Morris received in official quarters was scant compared with that which his eminence and vast influence in the world of art and letters might have warranted. The distinction he valued most was being elected, in 1882, an Honorary Fellow of his old college, Exeter, at Oxford, where he had already taken his M.A. degree in 1875.

In 1876, and thenceforward every subsequent year to 1895—that is for twenty years in succession, until his health broke down and he could no longer serve—Morris was appointed one of the examiners of the works submitted for the National Competition of Schools of Science and Art and Art Classes at South Kensington. That the department “set great store upon his experience and judgment” was testified by the chairman in introducing him before his lecture at the Health Exhibition in 1884.

In 1882 a Royal Commission was being held to inquire into the subject of technical instruction, and Mr. Morris having been called upon to give evidence was examined on March 17th, at South Kensington, Mr. Bernhard Samuels in the chair. The minutes of the proceedings were published in a Government Blue Book. Morris's evidence, embodying as it does the results of his practical experience on the questions at issue, is so valuable that extracts from it may well be given here. The inquiry at an early stage being directed to the comparative degrees of originality of the French and of the people of this country, Morris said that he believed certainly that the latter possess this quality, and that although a great deal is talked about the superiority of the French in design, he did not think the point was one of essential difference in character between the two peoples as such. “It is,” said he, “to a great extent a question of training. The French are above all things masters of style in the arts of design. For my own part I doubt if they have so much innate love of beauty as a great part of our population has. In

matters of style the French are supreme ; they can take two or three ugly things and combine them into a congruous whole which looks plausible at least." Asked to define the mastery of style which he had said he considered to be a national characteristic of the French, Morris replied that what he meant might be described as the ingenious faculty of working up one thing to fit in with another into a result which strikes the eye at once. At the same time, he said, "I think that in appreciation of beauty, in love for beautiful lines and colours, the French cannot be said to be superior to the English, certainly not in matters of colour. . . . So long as a thing is in a definite style it seems to satisfy the ordinary French mind, even though it is obviously ugly. . . . The department of manufacture into which design enters, that I know most of, from my own business, is textiles. . . . We English copy largely from the French in some things. I was in Manchester some time ago and a calico printer there showed me his designs, and on my asking where he got them, he told me most of them came from Paris ; from what he said I judge that it is a common practice in Manchester to buy parcels of drawings from Paris, and shuffle and piece them into a variety of patterns." Continuing he said : "I think it is a thing to be rather deprecated that there should be a class of mere artists like some of these Paris designers, who furnish designs, as it were, ready made, to what you may call the technical designers, the technical designers having next to nothing to do with the drawing. . . . The designer learns about as much as is necessary for his work from the weaver in a perfunctory and dull sort of manner. . . . I think it would be better, when it could be managed, that the man who actually goes through the technical work of counting the threads and settling how the thing is to be woven through and through, should do the greater part of the drawing." Asked what practical remedy he would propose Morris replied : "What I want to see really is, and that is the bottom of the whole thing, an education all round of the workman, from the lowest to the highest, in technical matters as in others." When asked whether he considered that elementary literary

instruction has much influence upon the ultimate success of a workman as a workman, Morris replied: "Yes: I should say it has undoubtedly. I often have great difficulty in dealing with the workmen I employ in London because of their general ignorance." "Would you consider that, in addition to literary instruction, instruction in drawing should be given in elementary schools, to those who are to become artizans in after life?" "I think, undoubtedly, everybody ought to be taught to draw just as much as everybody ought to be taught to read and write." In another place Morris says: "As to the kind of drawing that should be taught to men engaged in ornamental work there is only *one best* way of teaching drawing, and that is teaching the scholar to draw the human figure: both because the lines of a man's body are much more subtle than anything else, and because you can more surely be found out and set right if you go wrong. I do think that such teaching as this, given to all people who care for it, would help the revival of the arts very much: the habit of discriminating between right and wrong, the sense of pleasure in drawing a good line, would really, I think, be education in the due sense of the word for all such people as had the germs of invention in them." Or, as he expressed it before the Commission: "My own view is that drawing should be taught more or less from drawing the human figure, because it gives you a standard of correctness that nothing else can do. I should not say, however, that it was absolutely essential. There are some people who have no great turn for drawing from the figure, who would, nevertheless, make clever draughtsmen in drawing from plant-form." Touching further details of the training recommended by him, Morris said: "There are two chief things that would have to be thought of in providing facilities for study for the art of design. However original a man may be, he cannot afford to disregard the works of art that have been produced in times past when design was flourishing; he is bound to study old examples, but he is also bound to supplement that by a careful study of nature, because, if he does not, he will certainly fall into a

sort of cut-and-dried conventional method of designing, which is the bane of most of these French designs that we are talking about; and the only way for a person to keep clear of that, especially one in the ordinary rank and file of designers, is to study nature along with the old examples. It takes a man of considerable originality to deal with the old examples, and to get what is good out of them, without making a design which lays itself open to the charge of plagiarism. No doubt the only help out of that is for a man to be always drawing from nature, getting the habit of knowing what beautiful forms and lines are; that I think is a positive necessity." Elsewhere, on this subject, he refers to his own experiences: "Part of the common and necessary advice given to art students was to study antiquity; and no doubt many of you," said Morris in his address delivered in 1879 before the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design, "like me, have done so; have wandered, for instance, through the galleries of the admirable museum of South Kensington, and, like me, have been filled with wonder and gratitude at the beauty which has been born from the brain of man." Nevertheless, Morris was quite conscious of the fact that the existence of museums and art collections is *per se* no panacea for present evils. Men are not made artists by the mere act of frequenting these institutions. It is only to those who are already "beginning to get their eyesight" that such exhibitions are of service, "but it is clear that they cannot get at the great mass of people who will at present stare at them in unintelligent wonder." And, again, he says, that under existing circumstances "our museums and art schools will be but amusements of the rich."

Referring to another aspect of the subject, Morris said before the Commission that what he had found in using the South Kensington Museum, "and perhaps I have used it as much as any man living," was that it had got more things than it knew what to do with; although he expressed himself quite adverse to breaking up the collection and distributing it among provincial centres. What was wanted were typical specimens of good work, not a mere

multiplication of articles. The objects were required for educational purposes only, not as curiosities. The "museum in the metropolis should contain complete collections in all styles, and when an opportunity occurred for purchasing private collections, any gaps in the metropolitan collection should be filled up at the expense of the nation." But a good many things not wanted to fill up gaps in that collection might be sent to the provinces. "I know," he went on to say, "there are things stored away in chests which might be sent to provincial museums. As far as regards the famous Bock collection of textiles, which is one of the finest in the world—yet one that has many duplicates and other specimens almost duplicates—it could be done; and as far as regards the Indian collection also it could be done." As to the circulation of objects belonging to South Kensington, Morris did not think it a good plan. "In the first place, these things are extremely precious, and if destroyed can never be replaced; the risk in transit, though it may not be absolutely great, still is a risk, and should only be run when there is a strong necessity. I cannot help looking upon the thing from a collector's point of view, I am in terror of these things getting destroyed by accident." Resuming the subject, he said there was another objection to the circulation of these objects, viz.: "A museum, to be of any great use to those who are studying it as artists or as designers, must be arranged in a permanent manner, so that one can come day after day and see the same thing; so that a man who is a lecturer can take his class to the museum and give a lecture on such and such an article; or that a manufacturer, like myself, can take a designer to the museum and say, 'I want a thing done in such and such way.'" It is in the highest degree exasperating to come, looking for some object one particularly desires for any purpose, and to find its vacant place supplied by a white label: "temporarily removed to" so and so. "Therefore I think," said Morris, "it is very much better that the provinces should have their own museums; if small ones it does not matter so long as they are typical. . . . I would give all the national

aid to such museums that could be given without robbing the great existing museum."

On the subject of provincial schools of art, Morris stated as the result of his experience as a judge in the National Art Competition: "Of course everyone knows that the character of the work done at the different schools depends very much upon the masters at the head of them. There is one thing which, I think, perhaps might be more impressed upon those masters than it is, and that is that one does not particularly want to train up the students as picture painters. There are some schools where this is overdone, but that is a matter of accident owing to the master having a turn in that direction." Again, Morris found that local manufactures had a certain influence in determining the class of designs produced in any particular district. As an instance of this he remarked: "I think that the designing for carpets is a great deal done in the places where the carpets are made. The reason I say that is, that I remember two years ago we gave the gold medal for a design for a carpet, and it turned out that the student came from the Salisbury School of Art; therefore he had been working at Wilton, no doubt. I know that the Kidderminster School always sends in a good many designs for carpets; in fact, they mostly come from Kidderminster."

Asked whether he could suggest anything that might be done at headquarters in the national competitions to encourage designing, Morris replied: "My view is that not quite enough attention is given to the turning out of the actual goods themselves; for example, we cannot give prizes for the things turned out. We can only give prizes for the designs. I think it would be a very good thing to give prizes for the goods themselves. Prizes ought to be given for careful and artistic execution, as well as for general excellence and appropriateness of design."

Recurring once more to the subject of practical designers in his own craft, Morris said: "All the weaving designers that I have met, that is to say the few I have had to deal with myself, had been trained in art schools, and

could draw passably; but what really happened to them was that they had finally too much to do in the mechanical line to be able to attend much to drawing; that is where the difficulty appeared to be. . . . I think that there ought to be some opportunities afforded by the art schools for people to learn the practical part of designing: as to the workshop training in most trades, it is certainly not sufficient. The old system of apprenticeship, by which workmen learned their craft, is a good deal broken down now, and nothing as yet has taken its place. I should think that most of the young men learn their work in a very happy-go-lucky manner; they are practically not taught at all; they pick up a knowledge of their trade. There should be some systematic training."

In answer to the question whether one could introduce looms into the art schools, Morris replied "Yes, of course; they don't take up a vast amount of room. . . . It would be a great advantage for one who was learning designing to see weaving going on. I think it essential that a designer should learn the practical way of carrying out the work for which he designs; he ought to be able to weave himself. . . . There would be one advantage in learning it in the school, in the fact that the learner would not be so much hurried over the work as he would be in a factory.

. . . I think it absolutely essential that the designer should be thoroughly acquainted with the particular machine which is ultimately to fabricate the material for which his design is prepared. . . . A man employs a designer to draw his patterns. One of two things happens; either the designer has learnt the method of execution in a totally perfunctory manner and takes no interest in it, but goes only by a certain set of rules, and is therefore cramped and made dull and stupid by going by them; or, on the other hand, as sometimes happens, the manufacturer goes to a more dignified kind of artist, who, knowing nothing of the way in which the thing has to be done, produces a kind of puzzle for the manufacturer. The manufacturer, having paid for it, takes it away and does what he can with it; he must do something with it, and

so he chops the design up and adapts it to his purpose as well as he can. The design is spoilt, and when executed looks not better, but worse, than the ordinary cut-and-dried trade design; so that the manufacturer has got no good by employing the great artist." . . . "You believe that it is necessary that by some means, either in the school or in the factory, the designer should make himself acquainted with the exigencies of the machine and material in which the design is to be executed?" "Yes," replied Morris, "I speak as strongly as I can upon that. I think that this is the very foundation of all design."

Before concluding this chapter it may be well to gather some further details from Mr. Morris's published opinions on the subjects to which reference has already been made. And, firstly, with regard to the decorative or minor arts. "It seems to me," said Morris in his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," "that the lesser arts, when they are rejected, are so treated for no sufficient reason, and to the injury of the community; therefore I feel no shame in standing before you as a professed pleader and advocate for them, as indeed I well may, since it is through them that I am the servant of the public, and earn my living with abundant pleasure. Then comes the question—what are to be considered the Lesser Arts of Life? . . . I want you to agree with me in thinking that these lesser arts are really a part of the greater ones. . . . The Greater Arts of Life, what are *they*? Since many people may use the word in very different senses, I will say, without pretending to give a definition, that what I mean by an art is some creation of man which appeals to his emotions and his intellect by means of his senses. . . . If we are to be excused for rejecting the arts it must be not because we are contented to be less than men, but because we long to be more than men. . . . You understand that our ground is, that not only is it possible to make the matters needful to our daily life works of art, but that there is something wrong in the civilization that does not do this: if our houses, our clothes, our household furniture and utensils are not works of art, they are either wretched makeshifts, or, what

s worse, degrading shams of better things. Furthermore, if any of these things make any claim to be considered works of art, they must show obvious traces of the hand of man guided directly by his brain, without more interposition of machines than is absolutely necessary to the nature of the work done. Again, whatsoever art there is in any of these articles of daily use must be evolved in a natural and unforced manner from the material that is dealt with, so that the result will be such as could not be got from any other material : if we break this law we make a triviality, a toy, not a work of art. Lastly, love of nature in all its forms must be the ruling spirit of such works of art as we are considering ; the brain that guides the hand must be healthy and hopeful, must be keenly alive to the surroundings of our own days, and must be only so much affected by the art of past times as it is natural for one who practises an art which is alive, growing, and looking towards the future."

Again : " Let me say it, that either I have erred," said Morris, " in the aim of my whole life, or that the welfare of these lesser arts involves the question of the content and self-respect of all craftsmen, whether you call them artists or artizans. . . . My hope is . . . that people will some day learn something of art, and so long for more, and will find; as I have, that there is no getting it save by the general acknowledgment of the right of every man to have fit work to do in a beautiful home. Therein lies all that is indestructible of the pleasure of life ; no man need ask for more than that, no man should be granted less ; and if he falls short of it, it is through waste and injustice that he is kept out of his birthright." Again : " I must ask you to believe that everyone of the things that goes to make up the surroundings among which we live must be either beautiful or ugly, either elevating or degrading to us, either a torment and burden to the maker of it to make, or a pleasure and a solace to him. . . . ' Art is man's expression of his joy in labour.' If those are not Professor Ruskin's words they embody at least his teaching on this subject. Nor has any truth more important ever been

stated ; for if pleasure in labour be generally possible, what a strange folly it must be for men to consent to labour without pleasure, and what a hideous injustice it must be for society to compel most men to labour without pleasure! For since all men not dishonest must labour, it becomes a question either of forcing them to lead unhappy lives or allowing them to live happily." And speaking of his own work Morris says: "The division of labour . . . has pressed specially hard on that part of the field of human culture in which I was born to labour. That field of the arts whose harvest should be the chief part of human joy, hope, and consolation, has been . . . dealt hardly with by the division of labour, . . . nay, so searching has been this tyranny, that it has not passed by my own insignificant corner of labour, but as it has thwarted me in many ways, so chiefly perhaps in this, that it has so stood in the way of my getting the help from others which my art forces me to crave, that I have been compelled to learn many crafts, and belike . . . forbidden to master any."

Mr. Morris's views on various styles of architecture ought to be noted, as they had an important bearing on his own artistic work. The refinement, the grace of form and proportion in Greek architecture did not blind him to its stringent limitations. He recognized that "timber-building was the origin of the Greek temple. The Greek pillar was a wooden post, its lintel a timber beam. . . . The form of the timber hall, with its low-pitched roof, its posts and beams, had got to be considered a holy form by the Greeks, and they did not care to carry dignified architecture further, or invent any more elaborate form of construction. . . . For the rest, in spite of all the wonders of Greek sculpture, we must needs think that the Greeks had done little to fix the future architecture of the world: there was no elasticity or power of growth about the style; right in its own country, used for the worship and aspirations which first gave it birth, it could not be used for anything else." "The bones of it," says Morris in another place, "its merely architectural part, are little changed from the Barbarian or primal building, which is a mere

piling or jointing together of material, giving one no sense of growth in the building itself, and no sense of the possibility of growth in the style. The one Greek form of building with which we are really familiar, the columnar temple, though always built with blocks of stone, is clearly a deduction from the wooden god's-house or shrine, . . . nor had this god's-house changed. . . . In fact, rigid conservatism of form is an essential part of Greek architecture as we know it. From this conservatism of form there resulted a jostling between the building and its higher ornament. In early days, indeed, when some healthy barbarism yet clung to the sculpture, the discrepancy is not felt; but . . . it becomes more and more obvious, and more and more painful, till at last it becomes clear that sculpture has ceased to be a part of architecture and has become an extraneous art bound to the building by habit or superstition. The form of the ornamental building of the Greeks, then, was very limited, had no capacity in it for development, and tended to divorce from its higher or epical ornament. . . . The inferior parts of the ornament are so slavishly subordinated to the superior, that no invention or individuality is possible in them, whence comes a kind of bareness and blankness, a rejection, in short, of all romance, which . . . puts the style . . . aside as any possible foundation for the style of the future architecture of the world." On the other hand, "the art of the peoples collected under the Roman name" made so great an impression upon modern art that Morris saw "nothing for it but to say that it invented architecture—no less." For the Romans seized on the great device of "the arch, the most important invention to house-needing men that has been, or can be made. . . . They were the first to use it otherwise than as an ugly necessity, and, in so using it, they settled what the architecture of civilization must henceforward be. Nor was their architecture, stately as it was, any longer fit for nothing but a temple,—a holy railing for the shrine or symbol of the god; it was fit for one purpose as for another—church, house, aqueduct, market-place or castle; nor was it the

style of one country or one climate, it would fit itself to north or south, snow-storm or sand-storm alike. Though pedants might make inflexible rules for its practice when it was dead or dying, when it was alive it did not bind itself too strictly to rule, but followed, in its constructive part at least, the law of nature ; in short, it was a new art,—the great art of civilisation.” “To my mind,” says Morris in another place, “organic architecture, architecture which must necessarily grow, dates from the habitual use of the arch, which, taking into consideration its combined utility and beauty, must be pronounced to be the greatest invention of the human race. Until the time when man not only had invented the arch, but had gathered boldness to use it habitually, architecture was necessarily so limited that strong growth was impossible to it. . . . Once furnished with the arch, man has conquered Nature in the matter of building. . . . In . . . the ornamental side” (as distinguished, that is, from mere engineering), “Roman building used the arch and adorned it, but disguised its office, and pretended that the structure of its buildings was still that of the lintel, and that the arch bore no weight worth speaking of.” In fact, in the strict Roman style “the construction and ornament did not interpenetrate,” its architecture was *of itself* inorganic, and had “not got the qualities essential to making it a foundation for any possible new-birth of the arts.” It was bound to come to an end, “yet in perishing it gave some token of the coming change,” of the rise of the new and living architecture, which was born on the day when the Roman “builders admitted that their lintel was false, and that the arch could do without it.” “Three great buildings mark its first feeble beginning, its vigorous early life, its last hiding away beneath the rubbish heaps of pedantry and hopelessness. I venture to call these buildings in their present state, the first the strangest, the second the most beautiful, the third the ugliest of the buildings raised in Europe before the nineteenth century. The first of these is the palace of Diocletian at Spalato ; the second, the church of St. Sophia at Constantinople ; the third, the

Church of St. Peter at Rome." (Now since Mr. Morris never visited Spalato himself, it is like enough that he was indebted to Professor Freeman's interesting "Historical Essays," Third Series, and "Sketches from the Subject and Neighbour Lands of Venice," for particulars of the palace of Diocletian.) It was there, in the first decade of the fourth century, that "the movement of new life was first felt," says Morris. "There is much about the building that is downright ugly, still more that is but a mass of worn-out tradition; but there first, as far as we know, is visible the attempt to throw off the swathings of ill-understood Greek art, with which Roman architecture had encumbered itself, and to make that architecture reasonable and consistent with the living principles of art." There one may "see for the first time the arch acting freely and without the sham support of the Greek beam-architecture." This building, then, marks "the first obscure beginning of Gothic or organic architecture; henceforth till the beginning of the modern epoch all is growth uninterrupted, however slow." "But at Spalato, though the art was trying to be alive, it was scarcely alive, and what life is in it is shown in its construction only, and not in its ornament. Our second building, St. Sophia," built by Justinian in 540, "has utterly thrown aside all pedantic encumbrances and is most vigorously alive. . . . It is not bound by the past, but it has garnered all that there was in it which was fit to live and produce fresh life; it is the living child and the fruitful mother of art, past and future. That, even more than the loveliness which it drew forth from its own present, is what makes it the crown of all the great buildings of the world." Mr. Morris's veneration for "this most lovely building" was boundless. Indeed, some have gone so far as to account for his having associated himself (as he did notably in 1876 and 1878), with the anti-Turkish party, because his whole nature revolted in horror at the idea of the Temple of the Holy Wisdom being in the hands of the infidel. At any rate, without wanting to rob William Morris of the credit of being prompted by motives of the purest philan-

thropy in championing the victims of Turkish violence, one may quite well believe that his zeal for the fabric of St. Sophia, perverted to uses for which it was never designed, intensified his antipathy to the alien and intruder become oppressor. "St. Sophia once built," continues Morris, "the earth began to blossom with beautiful buildings;" and, as he says in another place, "never, till the time of that death or cataleptic sleep of the so-called Renaissance, did" Gothic art "forget its origin, or fail altogether in fulfilling its mission of turning the ancient curse of labour into something more like a blessing. As to the way in which it did its work . . . I have but little need to speak, since there is none of us but has seen and felt some portion of the glory which it left behind, but has shared some portion of that most kind gift it gave the world."

"The thousand years that lie between the date of St. Sophia and the date of St. Peter at Rome may well be called the building age of the world. But when those years were over, in Italy at least, the change was fully come, and, as a symbol of that change, there stood on the site of the great mass of history and art, which was once called the Basilica of St. Peter, that new church of St. Peter, which still curses the mightiest city of the world—the very type, it seems to me, of pride and tyranny, of all that crushes out the love of art in simple people, and makes art a toy of little estimation for the idle hours of the rich and cultivated. Between that time and this, art has been shut up in prison." "There are many artists at present who do not sufficiently estimate the enormity, the portentousness of this change. . . . How on earth could people's ideas of beauty change so? you may say. . . . Was it not rather that beauty, however unconsciously, was no longer an object of attainment with the men of that epoch? This used once to puzzle me in the presence of one of the so-called masterpieces of the New Birth; such a building as St. Paul's in London, for example. I have found it difficult to put myself in the frame of mind which could accept such a work as a substitute for even the latest and worst Gothic building. Such taste

emed to me like the taste of a man who should prefer his dy-love bald. But now I know that it was not a matter of choice on the part of anyone then alive who had an eye for beauty; if the change had been made on the grounds of beauty it would be wholly inexplicable; but it was not so. . . . St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's in London, were not built to be beautiful, or to be beautiful and convenient . . . but to be proper, respectable, and therefore to show the due amount of cultivation, and knowledge of the only peoples and times that in the minds of their ignorant builders were not ignorant barbarians. . . . Beauty and romance were outside the aspirations of their builders."

1 "News from Nowhere" St. Paul's is included among the few "poorish" and "silly old buildings" still allowed to stand as a foil to the beautiful new ones they built when Morris's dream should have been accomplished; while St. Martin's Church in the corner of Trafalgar Square is described, in the same work, as "ugly," and the National Gallery as "a nondescript, ugly, cupolaed building," and both have to make way for an open space planted with flowers and orchard trees. Elsewhere Morris says that all the houses built in the reign of Queen Anne, as well as those that are "distinctly Georgian, are difficult enough to decorate, especially for those who have any leaning towards romance, because they have still some style left in them which one cannot ignore; at the same time that it is impossible for anyone living out of the time in which they were built to sympathize with a style whose characteristics are mere whims, not founded on any principle." As to French fashions in decoration, the early seventeenth century is a period of transition from bad to worse, into the "corruption" of the "vile Pompadour period." "The fine arts, which had in the end of the sixteenth century descended from the expression of the people's faith and aspirations into that of the fancy, ingenuity and whim of gifted individuals, fell lower still. They lost every atom of beauty and dignity, and retained little even of the ingenuity of the earlier Renaissance, becoming mere expensive and pretentious though carefully-finished upholstery,

mere adjuncts of pomp and state, the expression of the insolence of riches, and the complacency of respectability. Once again it must be said of the art, as of the general literature of the period, that no reasonable man could ever bestow a passing glance at it but for the incurable corruption of society that it betokens." And again, "For us to set to work to imitate the minor vices of the Borgias, or the degraded and nightmare whims of the *blasé* and bankrupt aristocracy of Louis XV.'s time seems to me," says Morris, "merely ridiculous."

The only possible style of architecture for the future is Gothic, "which," said Morris, "after a development of long centuries, has still in it, as I think, capacities for fresh developments, since its life was cut short by an arbitrary recurrence to a style which had long lost all elements of life and growth."

Repeatedly, in different works of his, did Morris expose the disastrous consequences that ensued from the Renaissance movement. "The study of the Greek literature at first hand," he says "was aiding this new intelligence among cultivated men, and also, since they did but half understand its spirit, was warping their minds into fresh error. For the science of history and the critical observation of events had not yet been born; and to the ardent spirits of the Renaissance there had never been but two peoples worth notice—to wit, the Greeks and Romans, whom their new disciples strove to imitate in everything which was deemed of importance at the time." Again he refers to "that period of blight which was introduced by the so-called Renaissance," and says that the change came "at a time of so much and such varied hope that people call it the time of the New Birth: as far as the arts are concerned I deny it that title; rather it seems to me that the great men who lived and glorified the practice of art in those days were the fruit of the old, not the seed of the new order of things. . . . When the brightness of the so-called Renaissance faded, and it faded very suddenly, a deadly chill fell upon the arts: that New-birth mostly meant looking back to past times, wherein the men of those

days thought they saw a perfection of art which to their minds was different in kind . . . from the ruder suggestive art of their fathers; this perfection they were anxious to imitate, this alone seemed to be art to them, the rest was childishness: so wonderful was their energy, their success so great, that no doubt to commonplace minds among them, though surely not to the great masters, that perfection seemed gained. . . . Art by no means stood still in those latter days of the Renaissance, but took the downward road with terrible swiftmess, and tumbled down at the bottom of the hill where, as if bewitched, it lay long in great content, believing itself to be the art of Michael Angelo, while it was the art of men whom nobody remembers but those who want to sell their pictures." But "when the great masters of the Renaissance were gone, they, who stung by the desire of doing something new, turned their mighty hands to the work of destroying the last remains of living popular art, putting in its place for a while the results of their own wonderful individuality—when these great men were dead, and lesser men of the ordinary type were masquerading in their garments, then at last it was seen what the so-called new birth really was; then we could see that it was the fever of the strong man yearning to accomplish something before his death, not the simple hope of the child, who has long years of life and growth before him."

"This change," says Morris in another place, "we have somewhat boastfully, and as regards the arts quite untruthfully, called the New Birth. . . . But, strange to say, to this living body of . . . New Birth was bound the dead corpse of a past art. . . . On the side of art, with the sternest pedagogic utterance, it bade men look backward across the days of the 'fathers and famous men that begat them,' and in scorn of them, to an art that had been dead a thousand years before. . . . Henceforth the past was to be our present and the blankness of its dead wall was to shut out the future from us." The whole movement was retrogressive. It was no subject for self-congratulation, and Morris might fitly speak of "the miseries of the New Birth."

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